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Courbet's Early Notebooks: Private Imaginations of a Romantic-Realist

Louisa Mahoney
louisatatemahoney@gmail.com

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Private Imaginations of a Romantic-Realist

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Louisa Tate Mahoney

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Linda Nochlin, trailblazing Courbet scholar and feminist art historian.

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INTRODUCTION

LOOKING FOR COURBET

> Allow me therefore, Monsieur le Ministre, to decline the honor that you believed you were bestowing on me. I am fifty years old and I have always lived in freedom. Let me end my life as a free man. When I am dead, they must be able to say of me, "That one never belonged to any school, to any church, to any institution, to any academy, and, above all, to any regime except the regime of freedom."[1]

So wrote Gustave Courbet to Maurice Richard, the minister of science and culture for Prime Minister Émile Ollivier.[2] In 1870 Richard had selected Courbet to receive the Legion of Honor for his artistic achievements. Courbet refused. Yet Courbet had spent much of his artistic life pining for artistic acceptance like this. Indeed, Courbet's legacy is as perplexing as it is illuminating. The name Gustave Courbet denotes many things: the beginning of modernism, the creation of Realism, the destruction of the Vendôme column. "Courbet is the father of the new painters," Apollinaire once said. [3] Yet many attributes of Courbet's work also tie him to the Classical. Rather than being an entirely modern artist, Courbet should be seen as a bridge that links the Old Masters to the Modernists. A deeper look at Courbet's early life and source material, in an attempt to construct his private visual world, suggests that certain subjects were more important to Courbet than surveys of his public work often suggest. In this thesis, I will be

[1] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Maurice Richard, Paris, June 23, 1870.
[2] Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu. *Letters of Gustave Courbet*. The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 658.
[3] *Corot and Courbet,* Artemis Group, 1979, 10

closely examining two of Courbet's sketchbooks held in the Louvre Cabinet des Dessins which have been dated to the early 1840s, the very beginning of Courbet's artistic career. The purpose of my examination is to determine Courbet's source material, the things that were occupying his artistic imagination at this most pivotal time in his career. Notebooks and sketchbooks are an inherently private medium. They give an artist the freedom to explore ideas and subjects that perhaps will never be observed in their formal oeuvre. Therefore, a comparison can be made between what Courbet was publicly presenting as his work in the early 1840s and what he was privately thinking about and sketching.

Famously opinionated and interested in self-promotion, Courbet is a worthy challenge to any researcher. The hulking figure of the man looms over that of the artist, often threatening to overshadow the work itself. An important distinction must therefore be made between the Courbet personality and the Courbet artist. I intend to focus on the latter in this thesis. As tempting as psychobiography is, especially with an unbridled and controversial figure such as Courbet, I have done my utmost to resist it. That is not to say that Courbet's biography isn't at times pertinent to this thesis. A significant portion of this examination will be dedicated to Courbet's childhood, schooling, and life in Paris. Additionally, quite a bit of attention is payed to his experience of growing up in the French countryside in the nineteen-century, as well as his transition from living in the provinces to living in Paris. However, I have tried to ground any such assertions with textual and pictorial evidence from Courbet's oeuvre and letters in an attempt to not let Courbet's almost-mythic biography block out the most important part of this inquiry: his work.

This study of Courbet will formally end in the 1850s, after the Universal Exhibition and Courbet's Pavilion of Realism. The main thrust of the examination will focus on the early 1840s,

the time of the Louvre notebooks. In the 1860s and 70s, when he became more of a public figure and was entrenched in Commune politics, much of Courbet's art became increasingly tied to political narratives imposed on the work by Courbet himself or his fellow Communards. Though nineteenth century politics are inextricable from Courbet's work, this thesis will not spend a lengthy amount of time extracting political messages and motivations from Courbet paintings.[4] My examination will certainly not be devoid of politics, and it is impossible to discuss any art without at least acknowledging the context in which it was created, I will not be analyzing Courbet's work from a strictly socio-political standpoint. My main area of inquiry is Courbet's aesthetic sensibilities. Do politics affect them? At times, certainly, at other times, perhaps not. It is indisputable that when Courbet died his concerns and work was inextricable from politics. But due to the limited scope of my inquiry and my focus on his early years in Paris and his notebooks, which hold little to no political content, I have not found it necessary to place political messages into his work, I leave this to others, like Clark. Courbet himself often commented about the political implications of his work, especially in the later periods of his career. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on the things Courbet did not talk about as explicitly. I have focused on the hidden language of influences revealed in Courbet's notebooks, attempting to decode it in order to uncover the sources of his artistic imagination.

While researching Courbet I spent a lot of time with his letters. They are humorous, entertaining, and moving, and I found myself feeling like I knew Gustave Courbet through his writing style. It is worth noting, however, that I did not really read any of his original letters, as I read translated versions. Whenever letters are used, Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu's 1992 *Letters of Gustave Courbet* is used. I would strongly recommend this volume to anyone interested in

[4] For an insightful analysis of the role of politics in Courbet's work, I would recommend T. J Clarke's two volume analysis: *Image of the People,* and *The Absolute Bourgeois.*

learning about Courbet. As a mediocre French speaker, this thesis would truly not have been possible without a translation of the letters. Chu's edition is extremely accomplished. I have been told by French speakers that her translations convey an accurate equivalence of Courbet's voice in English. The strong sense of Courbet's personality conveyed in the letters made me want to include as much of Gustave's own voice as I could within this thesis. There is a level of difficulty and complexity integral to Courbet's character that is most efficiently communicated through his own epistolary writing. My desire for everyone to be able to hear Courbet's voice eventually led me to begin each chapter with an excerpt from one of his letters. When citing the letters themselves, I note the name of the recipient, the location that Courbet was writing and sending the letter from, and the date (or whichever of these factors is known). I also cite the edition of Chu's translations itself at times, as it contains many helpful footnotes explaining the letters and putting them into historical context. The edition also contains an invaluable appendix, containing comprehensive indexes of Courbet's work, a time line of his life, and a glossary of the people who were significant to Courbet's life and who he corresponded with, along with their biographies.

When I visited the Institut Courbet in Ornans in the summer of 2018, I spoke to Carine Joly, a member of the Institut's Commission Scientifique. We discussed why we found Courbet to be such a captivating subject of study. "Il était une meteorite" she remarked, "fou…mais lucide…comme Rembrandt." This "meteorite" quality was certainly something that struck me when I first encountered a Courbet. When comparing his work to other artists', there is something distinctly different about Courbet's style. Many artistic decisions and characteristics work to create this effect: the physical and temporal proximity of the image to the viewer, the tactile handling of the paint, the rustic color palette. There are three places where I have found

Courbet's "meteorite" nature to be the most evident: the letters, the grand scale paintings, and the sketchbooks. Each of these mediums feels like a pure expression of Courbet's style and virtuosity, completely uninhibited. If the grand-scale paintings are seen as the most finished and sophisticated manifestations of Courbet's artistic ideals, the letters and notebooks subsequently are the keys to understanding this style.

"What can we say about Gustave that he hasn't already said about himself?" This was the question I most often returned to throughout this process. The first solution I found was to not fight it, and allow Courbet's voice to come through as much as possible. The second was to pay attention to the things Courbet didn't say and focus on these topics. This was how Courbet's source material became an especially interesting subject, as mentions of artistic inspiration are almost impossible to find in his writing. A major breakthrough came when I found a reference to an 1876 exhibition of Courbet's work in Munich. The curators of the show referred to Courbet as the "master of Romantic Realism."[5] This felt like a far more fitting term for Courbet, whose enigmatic style could never just be defined by a single term or school alone. The name "Romantic Realist" also does a better job at indicating Courbet's crucial position as a bridge between classicism and modernism. This proposition of Courbet as a Romantic Realist also led me to think about his source material and private imagination.

Throughout his career Courbet was unrelentingly insistent of his own independence. Yet art cannot spring from nothing. One of Courbet's favorite motifs is the environmental phenomenon called *La Source.* A *Source* is the beginning of a river, where the water emerges from the ground and begins to flow. In different parts of his life and career, Courbet sketches and paints several different sources: the source of the Loue, the source of the Loiret, and the source

[5] Marcel Brion, *Art of the Romantic Era; Romanticism, Classicism, Realism*. Praeger, 1973, 164.

of the Lisons, among several others. He was fascinated with the ecological miracle *la source* represents, a moment of birth, of water emerging from rock. Tracing rivers back to their source is a means of searching for some type of truth or meaning. Truth was always something Courbet was concerned with in his work, a key philosophical component to the artistic style that would become Realism. In this thesis I aim to locate *La Source* of Courbet, using the Louvre notebooks as my guide. *Les Sources,* more likely. I know I will not find the single emergence, the water bursting from beneath the ground, as this does not exist. Rather, I hope to take several steps upstream, away from the Estuary of Paris and politics and Prudhon. For in the same way that a wide river does not emerge from nowhere, a great artist cannot exist without their influences and teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

COMTÉ BEGINNINGS

> There are a lot of idiots…who think that you can do a landscape just like that! They pack a few things together and set off for some country or other. They bring back their paintings and say: "That's Venice, those are the Alps." Well, that's just a joke! To paint a country, you have to know it. I know my country and I paint it. Those bushes, they're from where I live; that river, that's the Loue, and this one is the Lison; those rocks are from Ornans and the Black Well. Go and see and you'll recognize all my pictures.[6]

When I was researching in France, everyone told me the same thing after hearing that I was writing about Gustave Courbet: "well of course, you'll have to go to Ornans." Many have said that Courbet cannot be fully understood until you have visited his hometown. Located in the Franche-Comté region of eastern France (now called the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté), Ornans is a small rural village within the Doubs department.[7] Courbet scholar Michael Fried described it well: "I know of no painter the nature of whose enterprise makes it as imperative for the historian to visit the sites he painted."[8] Fortunately I was able to visit Ornans, and I spent several days in the town. As soon as I saw the shallow Loue river, the limestone cliffs, the specific way the light fell, I felt as if I had already gained a better understanding of Courbet's work. Though Courbet left Ornans in 1839, the landscape and atmosphere of his home stayed with him and are

[6] Robert Fernier, *Gustave Courbet*. Translated by Marcus Bullock, Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1969, 24
[7] *Gustave Courbet: 1819-1877*. Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, 14.
[8] Michael Fried, Courbet's Realism. University of Chicago Press, 1992, 125

apparent throughout his oeuvre. Certain places, themes, and characters drawn from life in the Comté echo across Courbet's mature style This practice of repeated imagery will be discussed in later chapters. Although Courbet formally left Ornans to move to Paris in 1839, he returned home for months at a time until the end of his life, never truly calling Paris home. Moreover, just as I had to visit Ornans to fully understand Courbet, Ornans is where this inquiry must begin.

Gustave Courbet was born in Ornans on June 10, 1819. Ornans is a town defined by its natural landmarks, nestled between the Loue river and the spectacular Roche du Mont (now famous for being the backdrop of *A Burial at Ornans*). Courbet's parents were Régis Courbet and Sylvie Oudot.[9] Régis Courbet was a local personality, known for his habit of inventing new pieces of farming equipment.[10] His unique disposition earned him the nickname "cudot," a term for a man who is always chasing foolish dreams. Compared to Régis' more whimsical personality, Courbet's mother Sylvie has been described as steadfast and intelligent, a sensible woman who often had to ground her idealistic husband. This combination is apparent in Courbet, whose personality is marked both by creativity and an intense work ethic and desire for tangible success and recognition. Sylvie's father, Jean-Antoine Oudot, was of a similar nature to Régis Courbet. Oudot was a vibrant man, enthusiastically engaged in the politics of the time. He was a devoted Republican, which Courbet admired, and later reproduced in his own politics. Gustave often recalled a piece of advice given to him by his grandfather when he was a boy, "Shout loudly and march straight."[11] Throughout his life, Courbet certainly lived by these words.

Régis Courbet's family possessed large amounts of land in Ornans and Sylvie's family was notable for containing several prominent lawyers. This rendered Gustave a "half-bourgeois,

[9] Fernier, 18
[10] Georges Riat, *Gustave Courbet*. Translated by Michael Locey, Parkstone Press International, 2015, 39.
[11] Fernier, 18.

half-peasant," an in-between social status that greatly influenced the development of his eccentric personality.[12] Courbet's family was nonetheless well-known and well connected in the Comté, and Gustave carried an air of provincial distinction with him for his entire life. Ornans was his home, and Courbet often expressed feelings of pride and ownership over the land. Once he left Ornans for Paris, he would often refer to Ornans in his letters home as "our part of the world."[13] Moreover, as Ornans was his, he was Ornans', the two have become interchangeable over the years after the artist's death. Signs along the highway in Ornans bear Courbet's photo and the words: "Ornans, Ville natale de Gustave Courbet". Courbet's upbringing in the provinces created the identity he proudly bore in Paris. Though he socialized, Courbet never fully assimilated to Parisian culture. Instead, he emphasized his own mannerisms and style of living. Unlike many artists who left the provinces for Paris and immediately began to pose as bourgeoisie, sophisticated painters. Courbet maintained his own rural identity. At times he would emphasize it for effect, posing as a rough-hewn laborer like the farmers and craftsmen of his home. Maintaining his Comptoise identity also shaped Courbet's artistic sensibilities. One can trace a direct correlation between Courbet's realism and his rural identity.

Gustave was the oldest Courbet child, and the only son. He had four sisters: Clarisse, Zoé, Zélie and Juliette.[14] Tragically, Clarisse Courbet died in 1831.[15] The Courbet family split their time between a house in the town of Ornans and a farm located on a plateau in a neighboring village called Flagey.[16] The first school Courbet went to was the Petit Séminare in Ornans, which he began to attend in 1831.[17] He commenced his artistic training with a man

[12] Fernier, 15
[13] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 26, 1841.
[14] Courbet, Chu, 643
[15] Fernier, 24
[16] Fernier, 16
[17] Riat, 8.

named Claude-Antoine Beau.[18] Often called "Père" Beau, the artist studied at the Ecole des beaux-arts in Besançon (the capitol of the Doubs region), before training in Paris with the painter Jean-Baptiste Regnault. Regnault was a member of the Royal Academy who won the Premier Prix de Rome in 1776.[19] He is known primarily as a prolific teacher and a competitor to Jacques-Louis David. One of his most well-known works, which now hangs in the Musée du Louvre, is entitled *The Three Graces* (Fig. 1). The work depicts three nude women standing together. Though the title indicates their mythical identities, the major occupation of the composition is the depiction of the female nude. The work is a study of the human body made academic only by the conceit of subject matter. *The Three Graces* and Regnault's exacting, academic neoclassical style offers an illuminating glimpse into the training of Courbet's first and most important teacher, Claude-Antoine Beau.

Only one entry to the Paris Salon is known to be from Beau. Entitled *Portrait of His Daughter at the Piano,* the work was shown in 1834. [20] Another painting of Beau's, *Gustave Courbet en saint Vernier,* from 1837, portrays a young Courbet (Fig. 2). The work, which now resides in the Musée Courbet in Ornans, resembles the popular neoclassical style of Beau's teacher Regnault**.** A young Courbet is shown in grand scale, placed within a landscape. The sun is setting, creating an atmospheric type of lighting. Gustave's clothes characterize him as a young and prosperous country gentleman. Courbet holds a scythe and gesticulates towards the ground, looking upward. The composition style is highly organized, with an extremely polished style of brushwork. The canvas is finished to the upmost degree and glossy, reminiscent of Regnault's *Three Graces* (Fig.1). There is a deep sense of drama, seen in the sunset and the

[18] Courbet, Chu. 638
[19] "The Three Graces by Jean-Baptiste Regnault." Provenance and Description. Musée du Louvre, www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/three-graces.
[20] Horst W Janson, *Catalogues of the Paris Salon 1673 to 1881*. Garland, 1977.

figure's affected gesture. It is a posed, theatrical type of drama, and could certainly be seen as the absolute antithesis to Courbet's mature style. Yet there are also several similarities between the work of Beau and the style of painting work Courbet will go on to develop. The stiffness of the figure is reminiscent of Courbet's figures, which were always lampooned by Parisians as looking like they were made of wood. The figure is placed harmoniously within a landscape, in the foreground and in close proximity to the viewer. Additionally, perhaps this work was the first time Courbet saw himself in oils. It could consequently be considered the original source of inspiration that led to the countless self-portraits Courbet went on to create throughout his career.

Two other works from Beau in Musée Courbet closely resemble *Gustave Courbet en saint Vernier*. *Vue d'Ornans, la leçon de peinture,* and *Vue d'Ornans* are both landscapes from 1835 (Figs. 3, 4). The landscapes feature atmospheric light and a close attention to detail, likely influenced by Dutch painting as well as the neoclassicalism of his teacher Regnault. Judging by these pieces, Beau's style is extremely controlled, evenly lit, and focused on environment and landscape, especially the environment of Ornans. His work evokes a sense of regional and provincial pride. Although Courbet's mature style does not physically resemble the work of Pere Beau, his lasting fixation on the environment of the Comté clearly recalls the work of his first teacher. Beau also greatly influenced Courbet's artistic methods. Robert Fernier, the artist and Courbet biographer who lived in Ornans, wrote about Beau's unique teaching style. Training with Beau was far less rigid and scholarly than the methods encouraged by any Ecole des beaux-arts: "Instead of crowding his pupils into some cramped space where they had nothing to draw except casts of antique sculpture and mediocre prints, he took them out into the countryside round Ornans and make them draw what was in front of them."[21] Beau's rejection of traditional

[21] Fernier, 55

teaching methods made a lasting impact on Courbet's rebellious style, shaping how he presented himself as an artist. Courbet continued to work outdoors throughout his career, a practice that will later be seen in the Louvre notebooks. Beau therefore had an immense impact on both the literal way Courbet painted as well as the psychological way Courbet regarded the artist and his role in society. The character of "the provincial artist" Courbet loved to assume after moving to Paris was likely shaped by his experiences at the tutelage of Claude-Antoine Beau.

Courbet's earliest paintings bear a close resemblance to those of his teacher. Two of the earliest pieces that exist by Courbet are *La Loue vers Ornans* and *Le Pont de Nahin,* from 1838 and 1837 (Figs. 5, 6). These works were done around the time that Courbet was under the tutelage of Beau, dated to the last year Courbet spent in Ornans and the first he spent in Besançon. The precise, evenly applied oil paint is deeply reminiscent of Beau's style. Young Courbet paints with the same atmospheric eye as Beau, seen especially in the pink sky of *La Loue vers Ornans,* which looks like a direct copy of the sky in both *Gustave Courbet en saint Vernier* and *Vue d'Ornans, la leçon de peinture*. Courbet is also drawing from the same subject matter as Beau, Ornans and the Comté. It is deeply important that Courbet's career began with landscapes, as it is the genre that persists throughout his oeuvre, especially the landscape of his home region. Like the Comté landscape, even after Courbet left Ornans, Père Beau remained a large part of his life. When Courbet went to Besançon to study at the Collège royal in 1837 he often mentioned Beau in his letters home, indicating a long-lasting relationship. In 1838, he wrote: "M. Beau came to see me, and that gave me great pleasure."[22] In 1849 Courbet sent home some drawings—lithographs which he said he had "lately become quite obsessed with"—to his family and asked them to give one to Beau.[23]

[22] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, December 28, 1837
[23] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, April (?), 1839.

In 1837 Courbet left home to study in Besançon, in hopes of receiving his baccalaureate. He studied philosophy, math, physics, geometry, and drawing.[24] The drawing course was taught by Charles-Antoine Flajoulot, a painter who studied with David and trained at the Ecole de dessin of Besançon.[25] An apathetic scholar at best, Courbet quickly became frustrated with the Collège royal. It seems he spent most of his time writing letters home, lamenting the living conditions, the classes, everything about his new life at the Collège:

> Since I have been here, I have not yet opened a book. I cannot do a thing, no one gives a damn about me anywhere, everyone tells me I cannot keep up. By always wanting to do better than others, you make me lose my diploma. Everyone is prejudiced against me, so it's pointless to consider it now. If I'm to be an exception to every rule in every way, I'm off to pursue my destiny.[26]

Courbet's complaints offer a valuable peek into his burgeoning personality. At the young age of eighteen one can already hear the infamous voice developing that will later pen manifestations and create subversive masterworks as provocative as *L'Atelier* and *Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine.*

Courbet missed Ornans the moment he left: "I hate to tell you that I am homesick and long so much for Ornans that I can't stand it."[27] Though clearly exaggerated in Gustave's melodramatic letters, school in Besançon seems to have been disastrous from start to finish. It is even thought that Courbet's scholastic difficulties went beyond lethargy and pessimism. In some letters he mentions having trouble reading aloud in class due to "speech difficulties."[28] These

[24] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, March 19, 1838
[25] Courbet, Chu, 647
[26] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, November 30, 1837.
[27] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, November 1837.
[28] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Besançon, December 28, 1837.

admissions, combined with his common spelling errors, have even led Petra ten- Doesschate Chu, Courbet scholar and the translator of his complete letters to conjecture that he might have a "mild form of dyslexia." [29] His messy writing and difficulties with spelling will later become apparent when considering his notebooks. Courbet's chirographical struggles are certainly a contributing factor leading to the common misconception that Courbet was undereducated, both artistically and academically. This is incorrect, as Courbet was a student until his twenties at least. The auto-didactic identity often associated with Courbet, moreover, is in many ways his own invention, a type of persona he created for himself later on in Paris, closely tied to his identity as a man of the provinces. However, school was never easy for Gustave, and when his parents sent him to Paris to study law, he soon dropped out and began to pursue a career as an artist.

Courbet moved to Paris by fall of 1839.[30] His initial impressions of the capital were lukewarm: "I will try to give you an idea of my present way of life, which is not as delightful as you out there in the provinces might think" he wrote to his father.[31] Courbet immediately felt like an outsider in Paris, which simultaneously frustrated and delighted him. "I am considered rather bearish because I cannot dance and I don't like company" he wrote in a letter home, unable to conceal his pleasure at being the subject of Parisian interest.[32] Despite this perceived status as an outsider, Gustave quickly fell in amongst other Parisian artists. In 1839 Courbet worked with an artist named Baron von Steuben, a history painter with many works in the Salon, who later would produce commissions for Louis-Philippe.[33] "I still work with M. Steuben, who does not

[29] Courbet, Chu, 1, n.2
[30] *Gustave Courbet: 1819-1877*. Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, 22
[31] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.
[32] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, December 26, 1839.
[33] Courbet, Chu, 660.

bother much with his students. All he does is appear every morning." Courbet wrote. Before he had achieved any real artistic notoriety, Courbet was already as pompous and self-righteous as in his late career: "I am, I think, the best in his atelier."[34] Courbet's confidence seems to have been bolstered by praise from fellow artists and teachers, despite what his later writings would suggest.

"I don't know whether I'll return to M. Steuben" Courbet wrote in 1840, around the time that he is associated with another artist and teacher: Nicolas-Auguste Hesse.[35] Courbet was brought to Nicolas-Auguste Hesse by his friend Adolphe Marlet, another Comptoise. Hesse was an académie artist, trained with Antoine-Jean Gros. His style was neoclassical, exemplified in his *Swooning of the Virgin* (Fig. 7). Executed in a clean and organized neoclassical style, the composition contains figures that are carefully grouped into two pyramids. Light falls evenly within the cave background, and Jesus' body exhibits carefully studied musculature. In the foreground of the composition is a still life of objects from the passion. Courbet might have seen this work in Hesse's studio, and certainly came into contact with many similar pieces. The influence of Hesse can be observed in Courbet's use of landscape, and the incorporation of objects or still life in a composition, like in *Self Portrait with Black Dog* (Fig.12).

Courbet's artistic education in Paris involved several other institutions and teachers. "I go to a life-model class at six o'clock every morning."[36] This referred to père Suisse's studio located at the Quai des Orfèvres on Île-de-la-Cité, a sort of drawing academy where artists paid to draw live models.[37] Decades later, a young Claude Monet came from Le Havre to Paris to study at the

[34] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, December 26, 1839.
[35] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.
[36] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.
[37] Courbet, Chu, 33, n.13.

Académie Suisse.[38] Courbet wrote about taking other courses as well: "I also take an anatomy class in the evening."[39] Despite Courbet's later iconoclasm and rejection of all things académie, especially regarding the depiction of bodies, the fact that he took anatomy and live drawing classes indicates a foundational interest in technical draughtsmanship. Courbet also visited the work of other artists in Paris, his contemporaries and predecessors, "as soon as the Salon opens I will go copy one or two paintings to take with me."[40]

During his first years in Pairs Courbet frequented the museums and exhibitions, which he often criticized mercilessly; of the 1840 Salon he wrote: "I often go to this year's exhibition of paintings, which I don't find too marvelous. There are some paintings that are good enough, but all the rest are insignificant, which gives us some hope of succeeding."[41] This critical regard of popular artists and the Salon endures throughout Courbet's career, and certainly drives his ambition to develop and spread his own artistic sensibilities. Courbet did not only study the modern painters; he also spent many hours in the museums during his first years in Paris. Courbet's close friends and fellow Comptoise Francis Wey wrote in his memoirs that Courbet toured the Louvre with the painter François Bonvin as his guide.[42] Unsurprisingly, Courbet was largely ambivalent with the French masters. The Italians did not excite Courbet either (he famously referred to Leonardo da Vinci and Titian as frauds).[43] Courbet consequently completely rejected the artistic tastes set by the most popular artists and critics of the day. Instead, the artists that interested Courbet at the Louvre included many Spaniards and Northern Europeans: Jusepe de Ribera, Francisco de Zurbarán, Diego Velázquez, Rembrandt, and Frans

[38] Ross King, *The Judgment of Paris: The Revolutionary Decade That Gave the World Impressionism*. Bloomsbury, 2007. 148.
[39] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, May 29, 1840.
[40] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, May 29, 1840.
[41] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.
[42] Riat, 13.
[43] Riat, 13.

Hals.[44] The Spanish and Dutch sensibilities aligned closer to Courbet's tastes and aesthetics. The subtle palettes of Rembrandt and roughness of Zurbarán were closer to what Courbet wanted to achieve than the jewel tones and polish of artists like Nicolas Poussin and Titian.

Though they align closely to Courbet's later work, these artistic preferences become somewhat surprising when considering the paintings that Courbet produced when he first came to Paris. His early *The Sculptor,* 1845 *(*Fig. 8) depicts a man (the artist himself) leaning beside a river. He is dressed in colorful silken clothes and besides him is a luxurious blue cape. His expression is one of rapture, gazing out as if in a moment of artistic inspiration. Altogether the work is reminiscent of Romanticism, seen in the palette as well as the languorous pose and antique depiction of the figure. Of course, many works of this nature are products of Courbet's financial situation. A more romantic work was more likely to sell, as it aligned closer to the artistic tastes of the time. Money also drove Courbet to sell copies to the art dealer Panier (who was also from the Franche-Comté) around the same time. "I saw Panier a few days ago. He'll come to the Luxembourg to choose a painting that I will copy for him for his salon. I just finished a painting that I had started to copy when I arrived. I'll try to sell it however I can."[45]

Courbet's work in the early 1840s includes pieces like *Reclining Nude* (Fig. 9), *La Sieste* (Fig.10), and *Le Gros Chêne* (Fig. 11). Considering these three works together with *The Sculptor,* many common themes begin to appear. Each work presents a figure at ease in nature. The compositions demonstrate a Romantic style, clearly influenced by Courbet's teachers and the popular art of the time. Though Courbet is known today as a Realist and a Realist only, works like these show that he also dabbled in the Romantic style. This idea will be explored further in the Louvre notebooks. Despite the Romantic inflection of these works, they are also

[44] Riat, 13-14.
[45] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, January 25, 1841.

not as different from the rest of Courbet's oeuvre as they may seem. The biggest strain of genius that can be plucked from these canvases is their treatment of landscape. Courbet's attention to color and materiality important to later pieces like *Burial, The Etretat Cliffs after the Storm,* and *Fox in the Snow* is already apparent in these early works. One reason for this might be Courbet's loyalty to his first teacher Beau's artistic teachings by spending as much time working outside as possible: "Ever since the weather has been fine enough to paint outside, I have left my teacher" he wrote in 1840.[46] The notebooks will also indicate Courbet's early commitment to working outside and drawing inspiration from nature.

Three aspects of Courbet's early life can be seen as most important. The first is the degree of education Courbet received, which is so often underestimated. Courbet was not an artist without formal training, but a man shaped by the influence of teachers such as Pere Beau, Flajoulot, Baron von Steuben, and Hesse. The second is the beginning of Courbet's early fascination with nature and landscape, which spans his life and career. The third is the observation that Courbet's early works in Paris appear more Romantic than Realist, which presents a question crucial to this inquiry: why can't he be both? Courbet once described the true school he belonged to as "Corbetist, that's all."[47] Moving forward, more influences will be uncovered and analyzed in order to more definitively describe what "Corbetist" really means.

[46] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.
[47] Christopher John Murray, *Encyclopedia of the Romantic Era*, 1760-1850. Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004. 222.

CHAPTER TWO

RESTLESS FOR FAME

> One thing is certain: within five years I must have a reputation in Paris. There is no middle course and I am working toward that end. It is hard to get there, I know, and there are few… for among the thousands sometimes only one breaks through. Since I have been in Paris I have seen perhaps two or three emerge who are truly powerful and original. In order to go faster I lack only one thing, and that is money, to boldly carry out my ideas…Enough of that.[48]

By the mid 1840s Courbet had been in Paris for several years. He was becoming increasingly frustrated and felt that he ought to have achieved more by this time. In the years before the revolution in 1848 Courbet submitted twenty-four paintings to the salon.[49] All were rejected but three: *Self Portrait with Black Dog* (Fig.12), *Guitarrero* (Fig.13), and *Portrait of Monsieur Xxx* (now known as *The Man with the Leather Belt*) (Fig.14).[50] Judging by these acceptances, though Courbet was certainly struggling to hone both his personal style and ideal audience, he was having a small amount of success. These successes are primarily portraits and self-portraits.

[48] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, before April 22, 1845
[49] King, Ross, 83.
[50] T.J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, University of California Press, 1999, 39.

It has been widely discussed that Courbet's most accomplished early works are his self-portraits, of which there are many.[51] In a remarkably straightforward explanation of his work, Courbet once said "I executed many portraits of myself in my life as my state of mind was evolving. I have written my life in one word."[52] A rough estimate shows that at least sixteen self-portraits are dated somewhere between 1840 and 1849.[53] In the index of Fernier's catalogue (the first volume, which covers the years 1819-1865) twenty-nine works are listed under *Autoportraits.* This number is only of finished works, excluding countless sketches and studies. Additionally, many of Courbet's early works contain depictions of the artist as one of the figures in a scene, though not strictly classified a self-portrait. An example of this is the earlier discussed *The Sculptor*. Curiously, some of Courbet's most romantic works from the beginning of his career include his image: *Joueurs de Dames* from 1844 (Fig. 15), *Les Amants dans la Campagne,*1844 (Fig.16) and the aforementioned *Guitarrero,* 1844, among several others. Two of Courbet's first works to be accepted by the Paris Salon were in fact self-portraits: *Self Portrait with Black Dog* from the Salon of 1844 and *Guitarrero* from the Salon of 1845.[54]

"I now have a marvelous little black English dog, a purebred spaniel, which was given me by one of my friends. He is much admired by everyone," Courbet wrote home during May of 1842.[55] Two years later *Self Portrait with Black Dog* was hung in the salon and highly praised, supposedly put in the salon d'Honneur. The work was Courbet's first to be accepted, entered at the encouragement of his teacher Auguste Hesse: "M. Hesse has said the nicest things about it to

[51] An especially in-depth analysis can be found in Michael Fried's "The Early Self-Portraits" from *Courbet's Realism.*
[52] "Gustave Courbet Self-Portrait Known as At the Easel." Provenance and Description. Musée D'Orsay, 4 Feb. 2009.
[53] This estimate is taken using Robert Fernier's *Catalogue Raisonné* of Gustave Courbet, which, though extensive and extremely well-researched, has only one edition which has not been updated since 1977. More self-portraits have been found and catalogued since then.
[54] Clark, 39.
[55] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, early May, 1842.

me and he has made me the most flattering predictions"[56] Courbet remarked. The artist's distinctive pride is shown in the work; its very brushstrokes exude a feeling of confidence and assurance seldom seen in the painting of a young, unestablished artist. A young Gustave gazes down from a seat seemingly on a cliff in the countryside. Next to him sits his dog, sleek and handsome as his master. Both figures stare confidently out of the composition as if to directly confront the viewer. Behind man and dog sprawls a rural landscape, more abstracted than anything Courbet completed under the tutelage of Pere Beau, yet still detailed in its relative obscurity. The artist is dressed well and holding a pipe. Next to him is a walking stick and a book. The stick, book, pipe, and dog act as markers of the artist's class and identity. He is educated, but rural, a wanderer but certainly not poor. The book appears to be sketchbook, making the painting a depiction of the artist at work. *Self Portrait with Black Dog* is therefore a declaration of Courbet's artistic methods, showing how grounded they are in the study of nature. More on this later. As the work is a self-portrait, it is assumed that the landscape depicted is from the Comté, judging by the appearance of the cliffs and fields. The work is therefore a symbol of rural pride and regionalism. Courbet's placement in the self-portrait is also intentional. He is within the landscape, yet also above it, surveying his domain, his "part of the world."[57]

Self Portrait with Black Dog contains a similarly posed composition and idealized landscape as the aforementioned Romantic-influenced works like *The Sculptor*. However, there is a quality in this work that has not appeared in the previously discussed paintings. Unlike *The Sculptor,* which bears a tangible feeling of the picturesque and the posed, *Self Portrait with Black Dog* conveys a sense of urgency. In *Self Portrait with Black Dog* the figures are large and placed almost as close to the viewer as possible, creating a sense of accessibility that had already

[56] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, February 21, 1844.
[57] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 26, 1841.

become typical to Courbet's work. Yet Courbet brings this accessibility one stuff further. The composition has a feeling of transience, a momentary glance at a man within a landscape. The image is close both in time and proximity. Comparatively, works like *The Sculptor* or *Reclining Nude* convey a sense of physical proximity, but not temporal. The effect of spacial proximity is accomplished largely through Courbet's unique painting method. The painter Alexandre Schanne recalled that Courbet "painted with a stiff brush, a knife, a rag, even his thumb. He used anything and everything."[58] This hands-on style lends an energy to the composition, reiterating its confident atmosphere. The combination of physical and temporal proximity is moreover an important development toward Courbet's Romantic Realist style.

Several of the motifs displayed in *Self Portrait with Black Dog* reappear in later paintings. The same figures and objects reoccur especially within other self-portraits: the walking stick and the dog in *La Rencontre (Bonjour Monsieur Courbet)* (Fig. 17) the pipe (and another dog) in *After Dinner at Ornans* (Fig.18) *Self-Portrait, Man with a Pipe* (of which there exists several iterations) (Fig.19), the book in *Portrait of Paul Ansout* (Fig.20) and *The Man with the Leather Belt* (Fig.14). Early in his career Courbet has begun to build a visual vocabulary that persists throughout his oeuvre. Motifs reappear again and again, forming a type of language through which Courbet creates his world. Later discussion of the Louvre notebooks will further illuminate Courbet's use of repeated images.

Courbet formally introduced himself to Paris through *Self-Portrait with Black Dog.* He continues to develop his aesthetic and identity in *Guitarrero*. Accepted to the Salon of 1845, *Guitarrero* is an as technically accomplished, if less confident work than *Self-Portrait with Black Dog.* Once again, the figure of Courbet is shown imbedded in a landscape. Dressed in a

[58] Riat, 31.

renaissance style costume similar to his dress in *The Sculptor*, the artist remains easily identifiable. Like in *Self-Portrait with Black Dog,* recognition was likely Courbet's intention as he sought celebrity and an artistic reputation in Paris. Though dated a year later, the overall composition of *Guitarrero* is far more overtly Romantic than *Self-Portrait with Black Dog.* The landscape is detailed but softened and idealized, curving around the figure of the guitar player. The musician looks away from the viewer, lost in an artistic reverie much like the figure in *The Sculptor*. Like both *The Sculptor* and *Self-Portrait with Black Dog,* in which the figure has a sketchbook, *Guitarrero* is also exploring a moment of artistic creation. Courbet refracts his own personality through this Romantic minstrel-esque character. The figure is placed in the foreground similarly to *Self-Portrait with Black Dog.* In both self-portraits a cliff or large rock pushes the figure forward, forcing the feeling of proximity previously discussed. *Guitarrero* lacks the temporal proximity that sets *Self Portrait with Black Dog* apart, however, remaining a more static and affected composition. Yet despite being regarded the weaker portrait from a contemporary perspective, *Guitarrero* was also accepted by the Salon.

Courbet's experimentation with purely Romantic subject matter exemplified in *Guitarrero* and *The Sculptor* indicates that he was willing to capitulate his idiosyncratic ideals in order to fit the tastes of the Académie and be hung in the Salon. Despite his best efforts to be seen as a renegade Courbet still craved the acknowledgement and appreciation a Salon acceptance provided and was anxious to become an established artist as soon as possible., *Self Portrait with Black Dog* and *Guitarrero* indicate the breadth of Courbet's work in the early 1840s, a time when the artist had yet to find his definite style. The portraits, along with *The Sculptor,* also indicate his experimentation with Romanticism, a thread that runs through his early work, though often overlooked.

Courbet's fascination with self-portraiture is likely due to several factors. A major one is the relative poverty that characterized the beginning of his life in Paris. The artist often wrote home asking for money or things to make his living situation more comfortable in the capital: "I spend only what is strictly necessary, to the point, in fact, that I am the laughingstock of the people around me. I am always so short of money that I cannot go anywhere with them on their little fun outings, and in Paris, believe me, that is hard."[59] As models were expensive, financial constraints therefore led Courbet to often turn to his own form as a subject. Money also dictated the materials Courbet worked with; he often reused canvases and purchased the cheapest supplies possible. Alexandre Schanne described them as "the most ordinary colours, which are sold by the kilogram, such as white, yellow ochre, vermillion, and black."[60] Thus, money constricted and defined his palette as well as his subject matter. The practice of self-portraiture begun in the 1830s allowed Courbet to explore themes that endure throughout his oeuvre, experimenting with materiality and proximity, and ultimately develop his personal artistic style.

Vanity was likely a factor as well, and one cannot talk about Courbet without acknowledging the legendary ego that existed long before he was a renowned painter. "The soul of Narcissus lived on in Courbet" art historian and critic Théophile Silvestre said in the *Catalogue de la Galerie Bruyas.*[61] Courbet himself agreed, famously dubbing himself "the proudest and most arrogant man in France" in 1853.[62] During the siege of Paris in 1871 Courbet donated a landscape to be sold in order to raise funds for the cause; the money raised was used to purchase a canon which was named- what else- *Le Courbet*.[63] Writer and fellow Comptoise

[59] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, May 29, 1840
[60] Riat, 31.
[61] Riat, 16.
[62] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Alfred Bruyas, Ornans, October (?), 1853.
[63] King, 300.

(born in Besançon) Francis Wey offers another illuminating anecdote pertaining to Courbet's proud temperament. In his *Mémoires inédits,* he recalls first meeting with Courbet:

> I met Monsieur Champfleury, and, as we were gabbing on the pavement, he mentioned a young, enormously talented painter, as yet entirely unknown, and who, being a native of my Franche-Comté, would be worthy of a visit…a tall young man with beautiful eyes, but very thin, pale, sallow, bony lanky. He nodded at me, without saying a word…then went to his stool in front of a canvas which I saw as I came up behind him. I don't remember ever having been so dazzled. The painting before me, treated with a rustic nonchalance, like the subject, showed a masterful insouciance, a controlled fire; the dark tones of the painting, the poetry of the execution were like no known style. [Wey said] "With such a rare and marvelous gift, how is it that you are not already famous? No one has ever painted like that? "Pardié," replied the artist with a very countrified Franche-Comté accent, "I paint like God."[64]

Indeed, despite his lack of tangible or financial success in the 1840s, Courbet was nevertheless unabashedly confident, further developing his public persona that came to both help and hurt the artist. The early self-portraits therefore allowed Courbet to market himself as well as his art, though they also made him an easy target for criticism from the old guard and the French government.

An important turning point arrived during the mid 1840s. "Lately I had a visit from a Dutch dealer from Amsterdam who liked my work a lot." Courbet wrote to his family in 1845. "He had been making the rounds of the Paris ateliers and he told me that he had not seen anything as much to his liking as what I made. He claims that he will make a name for me in

[64] Riat, 39.

Holland."[65] The Dutch art dealer in question is H. J. van Wisselingh who often visited Paris to search for up and coming artists. As Ornans is located near both the Swiss and German borders, it is worth noting that Courbet had likely spent time in Northern Europe before going there formally as an artist. The Louvre Notebooks indicate that Courbet traveled around Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium in 1841 and 1842. Courbet therefore was already somewhat familiar with Northern European countries by this time and had already been exposed to their art and landscapes. This will be discussed in length in the forthcoming chapters. Yet Courbet's meeting with van Wisselingh still marks the beginning of his official working relationship with Dutch art and the Northern European art market.

In 1846 Courbet traveled to Holland on the invitation of van Wisselingh. He went to study the Dutch masters as well as hopefully sell some work. To his family he wrote: "As for me, I am leaving for Holland where I absolutely must go. It is the only country where I can earn money right away. That is why I have to go and see what they like, study their old masters, see what their contemporary painters are doing, and get to know their art dealers."[66] Courbet's introduction to Amsterdam society was a man called Baron van den Bogaerde van ter Brugge, grand cupbearer to King Willem II.[67]

Courbet went first to Belgium and stayed for several days in Ghent, before going to the Hague, and then finally arriving in Holland.[68] At each stop he visited museums and collections. The artist took an immediate liking to Amsterdam: "I am already delighted with everything I have seen" he wrote home.[69] Courbet quickly became acquainted with several Dutch artists and

[65] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, summer 1845.
[66] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 1, 1846.
[67] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 1, 1846.
[68] Courbet, Chu. 67, n.1
[69] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Amsterdam, ca. August 15, 1846.

received commissions. He studied the collection of the Trippenhuis, the Rijksmuseum's predecessor.[70] To a friend he wrote: "in Amsterdam I painted a portrait that created an enormous impression…I have a [sic] unanimous ovation from the artists, all of whom…have come to see it".[71] Courbet is referring to his *Portrait of H. J. van Wisselingh* (Fig.21).[72] Van Wisselingh had first seen a painting of Courbet's at the Salon of 1846, *Portrait of M.xxx*. (*Man with a Leather Belt,* Fig.14**)** Van Wisselingh bought some of Courbet's work and invited him to Holland to study the work of Dutch masters, especially Rembrandt.[73] Courbet's portrait of van Wisselingh is an expression of Courbet's gratitude to the art dealer, as well as a direct response to the work of Rembrandt he has just been exposed to, and had been invited to Amsterdam to study. The influence is clear in *Portrait of H. J. van Wisselingh*. The composition is predominantly dark, featuring only somber tones of brown and grey. Van Wisselingh's face is revealed using light from an unknown source. Courbet is clearly inspired by Rembrandt's characteristically luminous compositions that so often explore the interplay between light and shadow.

Portrait of H. J. van Wisselingh was not the first time Courbet's early work had been compared to the Dutch master. In a letter from August 1846 Courbet described the response to a portrait of his friend Raymond-Ronnat-Frédéric Fresquet's son: "[the painting] has made quite an impression in Bordeaux…the Bordeaux painters maintained that it reminded them very much of Rembrandt."[74] The connection between Courbet and Rembrandt will endure throughout his career, most distinctly in his portraits. Courbet's first trip to Holland ended due to financial restrictions "life is very expensive here, almost twice as high as in France, especially for a

[70] David Bomford, "Rough Manners: Reflections on Courbet and Seventeenth-Century Painting." *Papers from the Symposium Looking at the Landscapes: Courbet and Modernism, Getty* Museum, 18 Mar. 2006.
[71] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his Mme Papeians de Morchoven, Amsterdam, August 24, 1846.
[72] "Gustave Courbet Portrait of H. J. Van Wisselingh." Kimbell Art Museum, 2019.
[73] Kimbell Art Museum.
[74] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 1, 1846.

traveler."[75] Gustave wished to return, and was extremely pleased with all he had learned, as well as the reception of his work: "I am assured that if I were to stay for two or three months and acquire a reputation, I could make money. They like my kind of painting."[76] This impression endured, and Courbet soon found himself traveling north once again. The summer of the next year, 1847, Courbet toured through "Brussels, Malines, Antwerp, Termonde, and Ghent", among other cities.[77] Travelling with friends, Courbet grumbled about his fatigue, but pointed out that it was "a splendid opportunity for me to visit Belgium and to see many paintings of the great Dutch masters, which are very useful for my education."[78]

Much has been written on the importance of the Dutch school and Rembrandt on Courbet's style, and later in life Courbet owned several Dutch paintings, including a Rembrandt (referred to as *St. Peter in Chains* in his letters) which the artist lost possession of in the aftermath of the Commune.[79] Throughout his life Courbet ventured north for artistic inspiration. In 1858 he took an extended trip, visiting Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, Bruges, and Frankfurt; and in 1869 he spent time in Munich, where he copied the work of Rembrandt and Frans Hals.[80] Moreover, the importance of his 1846 trip to Holland cannot be underestimated; Courbet's first formal visit was the beginning of a lifelong relationship with Dutch, German, and Belgian art and audience. Indeed, this fascination encouraged Courbet's self-created identity as something different from the typical French artist, and especially the Parisian artist. "I am not like the Parisians, though I associate with them" he wrote home in 1846.[81]

[75] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Amsterdam, August 15, 1846.
[76] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Amsterdam, August 15, 1846.
[77] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Ghent, September 6, 1847.
[78] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 1847.
[79] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Etienne Baudry, La Tour-de-Peilz, June 5, 1875.
[80] Bomford, 6.
[81] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, April-May, 1846.

Courbet was not the first French artist to draw inspiration from the Dutch school. The Louvre held many pieces by Dutch artists, particularly seventeenth century masters, and several private collections in Paris contained extensive works: Louis La Caze, Théodore Patureau, and the Baron de Rothschild, among many others.[82] French artists who visited Holland often returned with prints and copies that were then circulated amongst other artists. Yet there was still a commonly held opinion in France that Dutch art and the seventeenth century Northern Baroque were lesser forms than Italian or French painting. Academics wrote Dutch art off, deeming it not in the "grand goût", unlike Italian art.[83] Over time some artists were accepted into the canon, mostly colossal figures like Rembrandt and Rubens. After the revolution of 1848, however, the French experienced a renewed interest in Dutch painting, and specifically the work of artists from the Protestant Northern provinces after the 1830 separation of Belgium and Holland.[84] Many French Revolutionaries saw Dutch art as a symbol of progress and democracy, and desired for French art to deliver the same political and social messages. Seventeenth century Dutch painters, Rembrandt in particular, became important figures to nineteenth century French socialists.[85] However, what French leftists wanted to achieve through art is importantly quite different from the goals of seventeenth century Dutch work. The scholar and painter Eugène Fromentin articulated this difference as "what he calls the "absence totale de sujets" in Dutch genre painting, as opposed to the anecdotal, literary character of French contemporary genre."[86] For Dutch artists genre was the ends and the means, while French nineteenth century artists tended to use it in a more politically pointed way. Courbet's kinship with Dutch and German art

[82] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *French Realism and the Dutch Masters*. Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1974, 2.
[83] Chu, 9.
[84] Chu, 13.
[85] Chu, 16.
[86] Chu, 15.

seems to be more rooted in his rural, Comptoise identify, than his political convictions. Nevertheless, Courbet's experiences with Dutch, German, and Belgian art were certainly influential on his work, as will be revisited with the discussion of the notebooks. The lessons Courbet learned on these first journeys stayed with him throughout his career.

There was change in the air in late 1840s Paris. Politics were moving towards what would soon become the 1848 revolution. The art world was full of rebellious discourse as well. Courbet wrote that there was "talk among the painters... of the new school, painters who are refused every year at the Louvre, like me."[87] In the beginning of 1848 Courbet began to socialize more with the Parisian bohemia, becoming part of the artistic and academic circles. He predicted his new connections would help promote his work and was hopeful: "I am about to make it any time now, for I am surrounded by people who are very influential in the newspapers and the arts, and who are very excited about my painting."[88] These writers and thinkers included Charles Baudelaire, and Jules François Felix Fleury-Husson, who wrote under the pen name "Champfleury". Courbet and his compatriots would convene in Brasserie Andler, dubbed by Champfleury as the "temple of Realism"; pilgrims included Alfred Bruyas, Théophile Silvestre, Bonvin, Jean Gigoux, Castagnary, among many others.[89] Barye, Daumier, Bayre, Corot all supposedly stopped by at one point or another to observe Courbet, who was quickly becoming mythical in both his philosophies and drinking capabilities.

The 1848 Revolution was one of the many political uprisings that dot the tumultuous history of nineteenth century Europe. In many ways it was caused by the revolutions that proceeded it, Alexis de Tocqueville gracefully summarized the revolutionary pattern of France in

[87] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, January 1, 1847.
[88] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, January 1848.
[89] Riat, 31.

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where each successive *régime* is a direct reaction to the last: "Many of the laws and political traditions of the Ancien Régime suddenly disappeared in 1789 only to reappear a few years later, much as certain rivers plunge underground only to reemerge somewhat further on, bringing the same waters to new shores."[90] As the revolution drew nearer and nearer Courbet wrote home:

> Anyhow, I am not getting very involved in politics, as usual, for I find nothing emptier than that. When it was a question of destroying the old errors, I did what I could, I lent a hand. Now it no longer concerns me…To each his own: I am a painter and I make paintings.[91]

Many of Courbet's bohemian acquaintances were seen as agitators within the political struggle of 1848. But Courbet did not physically involve himself with the struggle. Though he expressed sympathy for the cause, when the time came to go to the barricades, Courbet stayed in his studio. "I don't fight for two reasons. First, because I do not believe in wars fought with guns and cannon, and because it runs counter to my principles," He wrote to his parents "for ten years now I have been waging a war of the intellect." Ironic coming from a man who will later name a cannon used in the Commune after himself. He continues: "The second reason is that I have no weapons and cannot be tempted."[92] This reassurance to Courbet's parents is somewhat ironic when considered along with the artist's later involvement in socialist politics and the Paris Commune. Indeed, the predominant modern view of Courbet places politics as a fundamental motivation behind his work. However, this association can often be somewhat overwrought, caused by the social circles Courbet was in as well as certain critics' analyses of his work. In

[90] Jon Elster and Arthur Goldhammer. Tocqueville: The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution. Cambridge University Press, 2011, 3.
[91] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, March 1848.
[92] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, June 26, 1848.

particular, Courbet's relationship with Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and his interpretation of Courbet's work still shapes the socio-political interpretations of his work. Moreover, the Revolution of 1848 was a time of artistic rather than political growth for Gustave. This perception greatly shifted as Courbet became closer to Proudhon. The philosopher saw Courbet's work as a perfect example of his anarchist and socialist views as applied to the visual arts. Take this excerpt from Alexandre Schanne's memoires, an account of a conversation between painter and philosopher:

> "Tell me now, Citizen Master Painter, what brought you to do your *Stonebreakers?"*
>
> "But," answered the Citizen Master Painter, "I found the motif picturesque and suitable for me."
>
> "What?" Nothing more?... I cannot accept that such a subject be treated without a preconceived idea. Perhaps you thought of the sufferings of the people in representing two members of the great family of manual laborers exercising a profession so difficult and so poorly remunerated?"
>
> "You are right, Citizen Philosopher, I must have thought of that."
>
> From that time on it was not unusual to hear Courbet say: "One would think I paint for the pleasure of it, and without ever having meditated my subject… Wrong, my friends! There is always in my painting a humanistic philosophical idea more or less hidden… It is up to you to find it."[93]

A similar description of the agenda of *Stonebreakers* (Fig. 22) appears in a now famous letter Courbet wrote to Champfleury in 1850 he describes the two figures as a commentary on life in

[93] James Henry Rubin, *Realism and Social Vision in Courbet and Proudhon*. Princeton University Press, 1980, xv.

the laboring class: "in that station one ends up the same way as one begins."[94] Yet Courbet also emphasizes that he was depicting something he saw, unembellished: "I made up none of it, dear friend. I saw these people every day on my walk." This is not to say that Courbet did not necessarily intend *Stonebreakers* to carry a message. Proudhon simply seemed to always insert a sharper pointed political meaning where before there was more of a feeling.

The Parisian old guard of artists and academics did not hide their disapproval of the Realists artist's and their politics. Romanticist painter Eugene Delacroix wrote about Courbet's fellow Realists in his journals: "He [Jean-François Millet] belongs to that constellation or crew of bearded artists who made the revolution of 1848 or encouraged it, thinking, apparently, that it would bring equality of talent as well as equality of wealth."[95] The press was no kinder to the artists involved in the revolution: "The fury of the modern iconoclasts in February, fell most heavily on the works of the great artists of France," an American Art bulletin reported.[96] Indeed, French art was changed forever with the revolution. Every previously accepted system of artistic instruction, acknowledgement, and patronage would soon change. Orléanist scholar Michael Marrinan describes the seismic shifts caused by the events of 1848:

> When Louise-Philippe fled France in February 1848, this hybrid pictorial strategy lost its patron and raison d'être. The ensuing patronal vacuum and exploded cultural codes encourages painting to proceed outward in two directions at once: toward either the

[94] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Champfleury, Ornans, February-March, 1850.
[95] Eugène Delacroix. The Journal of Eugène Delacroix. Edited by Hubert Wellington. Translated by Lucy Norton, Phaidon Press, 1951, 172.
[96] "Injuries to Works of Art during the French Revolution of 1848." *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1849, 17–18.

> reconstitutive, eclectic bathos of Couture or the rugged, neo-Romantic individualism of Millet and Courbet.[97]

Though the revolution increased the freedom of French artists, the lack of a regulating body was soon felt at the salon. Courbet, who had worked through the revolution with the principal goal of Salon acceptance, could not hide his disappointment in a letter home.

> Everything was accepted at the Exhibition this year, which did not do that much for me for I would have been accepted anyhow and I would have been noticed more. Right now it is impossible to notice anything for there are 5,500…I have ten paintings at the Exhibition.[98]

Though greater equality was shown in the post-revolutionary Exhibition, the sheer volume of work accepted diminished Courbet's compositions, which were finally beginning to find their voice. Despite the crowded walls and his reservations about admission policy, Courbet received recognition for his efforts. Critic Prosper Haussard wrote a flattering review in which he referred to Courbet's style as "a reappearance of Caravaggio and Rembrandt." He went on to ask "At the last three Salons, Monsieur Courbet has gone unnoticed. Is it our fault or his?"[99] In the preceding years, even when Courbet's subject matter was brutally criticized, his artistic skills are often still praised: "No one could drag art in the gutter with greater technical virtuosity" wrote critic Louis Peisse on *After Dinner at Ornans* (Fig. 18). [100] Consequently, as soon as Courbet was regarded as a successful artist, he began to push back on any suggestion that he had been taught or influenced by others. In a letter to Emile le Girardin, editor of La Presse, he requested not to be

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[97] Michael Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orléanist France*, 1830-1848. Yale University Press, 1988, 215.
[98] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Pairs, March 1848.
[99] Riat, 26.
[100] Clark, 69.

listed as a student of August Hesse in the 1852 Salon. "To tell the truth" he wrote "I must declare that I have never had a teacher…as I myself claim to be, the student of nature."[101] This began a period in which Courbet persistently revised his own biography, creating assumptions about his work that persist to this day.

After the revolution of 1848, the stage was set for what would soon become the defining moment of Courbet's career, *The Burial at Ornans* (Fig. 23). Changes in the political and artistic worlds had left Parisian society battered but attentive. Courbet's earlier Salon acceptances gave him the entrance he needed, and his bohemian circle was ready to defend him. The rest, as they say, is history. Now, however, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the 1840s, to take a closer look at the work Courbet produced during this first period of his career. Two sketchbooks from the early 1840s suggest alternate artistic sources and a wider imagination that what has been considered.

[101] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the editor of *La Presse* (Emile le Girardin), Paris, May 13, 1851.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOURCES OF COURBET

> Beauty is in nature and occurs in reality under the most varied aspects. As soon as one finds it, it belongs to art, or rather to the artist who can see it. As soon as beauty is real and visible, it carries its artistic expression within itself. But the artist has no right to amplify that expression. He cannot touch it without running the risk of altering its nature and, consequently of weakening it.[102]

The previous chapters have provided the biographical information necessary to understand Courbet's childhood, education, and first years living in Paris. It is therefore time to move towards a discussion of his notebooks. There is a mythic quality about Courbet which often immortalizes him as an artist without any teacher, free of the shackles of the Old Masters and the Académie. This myth was largely spread by Courbet himself, perpetuated in moments like his appeal to not be listed as a student of Hesse's at the Salon, or later in his career when he refused to teach younger artists: "You wished to open a painting atelier…I deny that art can be taught," he declared.[103] Previous chapters have begun to dispel this myth of Courbet's autodidacticism. Although Courbet certainly held an extraordinary talent and was an artistic anomaly at the time for not attending an Académie, he certainly did have teachers, from Pere Beau to August Hesse. Courbet was from a successful and powerful family who provided him

[102] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the young artists of Paris, Paris, December 25, 1861.
This letter was published in the *Courrier du Dimanche,* and is now referred to as Courbet's "Realist Manifesto"
[103] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the young artists of Paris, Paris, December 25, 1861.

with a thorough education. Additionally, it has already been mentioned that when he first came to Paris, Courbet spent plenty of time studying his artistic predecessors and copying works in the Louvre. Courbet also had the chance to study and copy the masters on various trips he took early in his life. Analysis of Courbet's early self -portraits has noted the influence of Spanish, Dutch and German art on Courbet's 1840s style.

This leaves the paradox of Courbet's artistic influences. In his Manifesto he claims to only be drawing from "the representation of real and existing things."[104] Yet within the next paragraph he contradicts himself, defining art as "the ability that issues from his [the artist's] inspiration and his own studies of tradition."[105] According to Courbet an artist should not create art out of anything that is not "real or exiting," he should work from his own inspiration, which can include "tradition." This admission greatly complicates Courbet's definition of painting as a "concrete art," purely a reflection of its own time. Courbet's admittance that an artist should incorporate tradition into their work changes his definition of painting from concrete to what I propose should be referred to as *composite.* This could be interpreted as a complication of Courbet's legacy if he is regarded rigidly as a Realist. That is not how Courbet is being defined within this thesis. Therefore, within this examination, the idea of Courbet's painting as composite will be taken instead as a broadening of his ideology, which can so often be overly pedantic. This expansion allows more room for examination into Courbet's source material and connections to artistic predecessors which is so often denied him. This broadening ought to be kept in mind when considering Courbet's sketchbooks.

Three notebooks exist in the Louvre Cabinet Dessins archives, RF 9105, RF 29234, and RF 29235. They vary in length, ranging from 13 (29235) to 70 pages (9105). 29235 and 9105

[104] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the young artists of Paris, Paris, December 25, 1861.
[105] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the young artists of Paris, Paris, December 25, 1861.

have been dated to the early 1840s, and 29235 is from much later, dating to 1871. The three sketchbooks offer a glimpse into both the beginning and the ending of Courbet's life and artistic career. Though the 1871 sketchbook offers much insight into the later part of Courbet's career, it is not as relevant, and will only be briefly mentioned in this study. Currently RF 9105, RF 29234, and RF 29235 are the only three known Courbet sketchbooks in existence, or at least the only complete ones. This renders them an all the more valuable and necessary resource to examine.[106] Moreover, the notebooks give a glimpse into the source material Courbet drew from, uncovering an artist who had more in common with his predecessors and contemporaries than is often thought. These findings support the earlier proposed idea that Courbet's style, especially early in his career, can be called Romantic Realism. Echoes of Romanticism, the German Nazarene school, and French Troubadour painting can be seen in Courbet's notebooks, complicating his modern reputation as a wholly autonomous artist, a man who declared that "art is entirely individual."[107]

The first two sketchbooks, RF 9105 and RF 29234 have both been dated to the early 1840s. The books contain much of the same subject matter, which is predominately landscapes and studies of people. The two notebooks differ in some specifics; RF 29234 contains many maritime studies and sketches of characters, while RF 9105 is full of sketches from Courbet's travels around Ornans and in Switzerland and Germany. In both books the majority of the pages are dedicated to studies of landscape. Of the 70 pages in RF 9105, more than half depict landscapes, many of them identified in inscriptions written by Courbet himself. Courbet notes the location on many of the pages, especially when the location seems to be somewhere Courbet

[106] Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, "The Purposeful Sightseer: Courbet and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Tourism." *Papers from the Symposium Looking at the Landscapes: Courbet and Modernism*, Paul Getty Trust, 2007.
[107] Gustave Courbet, Letter to the young artists of Paris, Paris, December 25, 1861.

is visiting or traveling through. “Place de la Bibliothèque Strasbourg” he writes on RF 9105-6, and again on RF 9105-66: “Lauterbrunn.” These pages in the notebook can be seen as a form of memento, souvenirs from his travels. Due to how many landscapes the notebooks contain, the majority of the sketches were done outside. From what is known about Courbet’s artistic training and Pere Beau’s teaching style, the young artist was used to working outside, drawing from observation in the field. As mentioned earlier, Courbet continued to work outside as much as possible, even after moving Paris. Though there are several instances of figural studies that were likely done of models, the vast majority of the pages being dedicated to landscape indicate Courbet’s primary focus on copying nature, rather than studying perspective or perfecting anatomical drawing. This can be seen as an explanation as to why so many of Courbet’s early self-portraits contain particularly strong landscape elements (and sometimes weak structural rendering). Landscape was clearly one of Courbet’s preferred subjects in the 1840s, and one can observe him honing that skill within the notebooks.

An important aspect of the notebooks that must be considered before anything else is that they are a type of travel journal. The sites in RF 9105 and RF 29234 indicate a lot of visits to Switzerland, Germany, and the Alsace region. Locations include: Strasbourg and Alsace (9105-3-4, 6, 8-9), the Vosges mountains in eastern France (9105-5), Baden-Baden, a German spa town in the Black Forest (9105 16, 21-22), Basel, Switzerland (9105-23), Valley Lauterbrunnen in Switzerland (9105- 35-36, 64, 66), and several towns in Belgium: Bruges (9105-49), Ostend (9105-51), Spa (9105-53). The Franche Comté is identified by Courbet in 9105-60, and it could also be assumed that many of the unlabeled landscape sketches are of the Comté landscape. While RF 9105 predominantly looks outward, featuring material from Courbet’s travels, RF 29234 focuses on his home department. RF 29234 contains sketches of Fort Belin in Salins-les-

Bains (29234-33), the source of the Lison River (29234-35), Saracen Cave (29234-38). The source of the Loiret, which is in the Centre-Val de Loire region, is also pictured in 29234-44.

Using the inscriptions (some of which remain indecipherable, due to Courbet's characteristically sloppy handwriting and poor spelling), as well as Courbet's letters and previous scholarly findings, a rough itinerary of Courbet's travels has been created. 29234 is the earliest sketchbook. It begins in north-west France. During the spring and summer of 1841 Courbet went on a trip to Normandy with his close friend Urbain Cuenot. He enthusiastically wrote home about the experience: "I am delighted with this trip, which has quite developed my ideas about different things I need for my art. We finally saw the sea, the horizonless sea—how odd for a mountain dweller. We saw the beautiful boats that sail on it."[108] This feeling of rapture echoes in his sketches from the trip. At least the first 14 pages of RF 29234 can be confirmed to be from this trip. These pages include three seascapes (RF 29234-1,3,12), three views of a port, most likely Le Havre (29234-4,6,7). 29234-5 includes a sketch of the boat that brought Napoleon's ashes back to France. Courbet commented on it in his letters: "we crossed on the magnificent steamship that transported Napoleon's ashes…"[109] Also in the Normandy section are three studies of the Normandy landscape (29234-8,9,15), and five studies of Gothic architecture of Rouen (29234-9-11, 13, 14). The specifics and significance of some of these motifs will be discussed later.

Courbet returned from his trip to Normandy by the end of the summer of 1841.[110] Next in 29234 is a sketch labeled "Dame Verte," a grotto located in the Franche-Comté region (29234-17), and the subject of local myth. Following this sketch are several pages of figure studies, close

[108] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, spring/summer, 1841.
[109] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, spring/summer, 1841.
[110] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 26, 1841

ups of faces and types. The next identified location is a mountainous landscape sketch of Chateau de Salins, a fort located in the Comté (RF 29234-30). Presumably the twelve pages between 29234-17 and 29234-30 were also done around Courbet's home in the Comté as well. Using his letters as reference, the date of these pages could be estimated to approximately September 1841. In a letter dated August 26, 1841, Courbet wrote home: "I am sending you these few lines…to tell you that I will be in our part of the world the first days of September…I cannot wait to be down there."[111] Courbet also mentions that he had spent "several days at M. Oudot's country house at Sceaux."[112] Located just outside of Paris, Sceaux could possibly be the location of the pages between the Normandy trip sketches (29234-1 to 29234-14) and the Comté pages (confirmed to begin on 29234-17, though it could be earlier).

Continuing through RF 29234 are several more landscape sketches that have been identified as locations close in proximity to Ornans. Returning home from Paris, Courbet seems to be taking exhaustive trips around his own home environment, perhaps gathering source material before returning to the capital. Indeed, this was likely the case, and motifs seen first in the notebooks that go on to appear in Courbet's paintings will be discussed in the next chapter. 29234 ends with several figure sketches, detail drawings of men, women, couples, and dogs. There are many notes on the back cover (29234-56), one section of which has been identified as several lines of Victor Hugo's poem: "a transcription of two verses from the ninth *Orientale* by Victor Hugo, *La Captive*."[113]

Courbet's itinerary now moves to the second notebook, RF-9105. It is estimated that there is at least a one-year gap between RF 29234 and RF-9105. The book's first pages are of

[111] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 26, 1841.
[112] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 26, 1841.
[113] Maytham, Thomas N. "A Reclining Nude by Gustave Courbet. 8 n2.

Strasbourg, the capital of the Alsace region located near the German border. This trip has been dated to 1842.[114] Unfortunately Courbet does not specifically reference the trip in any of his known letters. However, in May 1842 he writes to his family: "I think I will leave here [Paris] on August 15."[115] Keeping in mind the way Courbet refers to visits home in other letters, as well as his habit in the early 1840s to visit Ornans at the end of each summer, it can be assumed that Courbet was in Ornans during August and September of 1842. Additionally, considering the proximity of Strasbourg from Ornans (less than 200 miles), Courbet likely made this trip from Ornans, not Paris. The Strasbourg pages are at least 9105-3 to 9105-9, and 9105-1 and 9105-2, a sketch of a horse and a rocky landscape, respectively, could likely be seen as sketches from the journey to Strasbourg.

In Strasbourg Courbet sketched the streets (9105-3, 6), architecture (church of Saint Peter the Younger, 9105-4), as well as the landscape (9105-5,7, 9). In a rare instance of master-copying in the notebooks, page 9105-8 contains a sketch of the tomb of Marshal of Saxony Pigalle, from the Church of Saint Thomas. After the Strasbourg pages are several mountain landscapes that have been identified as Baden-Baden, Germany. Located near the Black Forest and the French border, the German town was a popular tourist destination in the nineteenth century. Baden-Baden is famous for its spa, and this attraction was likely the reason Courbet visited. In 1861 Courbet wrote to his father about his sister Zoé Courbet going on a trip to Baden-Baden.[116] In Baden-Baden Courbet sketched the landscape (9105-17-20), the baths (9105-21) and the Eberstein castle (9105-22). After Baden-Baden he went south, to Basel, Switzerland. There he sketched a timber bridge, noting the location at the bottom of the page (9105-23).

[114] Chu, "The Purposeful Sightseer", 2
[115] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, early May 1842.
[116] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, early September 1861.

Following this page are more sketches of a river, presumably the Rhine (9105-24, 25), a church, possibly in Basel (9105-26) and several mountain landscapes (9105-27 to 34). 9105-35, yet another mountain landscape sketch, been located as the Lauterbrunnen Valley in the Swiss Alps. From Basel, Courbet has continued South nearing Ornans once again.

The next twelve pages of RF 9105 leave much to guesswork. 9105-37 shows a forest landscape as seen through an oculus. 9105-38 and 40 are detailed sketches of birds. 9105-38, 41, 42, and 46 are all sketches of people, primarily women. The different pages offer varying degrees of detail and completion. 46 is a thin line sketch, while on page 41 is a detailed, dark, and beautifully executed study of a woman resembling Courbet's portraits of his sisters. Perhaps these pages date from when Courbet returned to Orans after the trip through Germany and Switzerland. 9105-43 to 45 show a group of people in a forest. Figures climb trees and nap on the grass, recreating in nature. Page 9105-49 importantly contains one of the few known copies in the Courbet notebooks, along with the study of the tomb in Strasbourg. The sketch has been identified by the Louvre Cabinet des Dessins as "Etude d'après une Sainte Famille de Van Dyck, conserve à Bruges." Specifically, the work being copied seems to be Anthony van Dyck's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt.* According to the Cabinet des Dessins this work was seen in Bruges, Belgium. The work now hangs in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich. After the copy is a page containing several studies of women (9105-50), a landscape labeled Ostend (9105-51), and a sketch of a city square labeled "place de Spa" (9105-53). Clearly these pages are from a visit to Belgium, a place Courbet frequently visited. However, first mention of Belgium in Courbet's letters isn't until August of 1847.[117] This therefore must have been an earlier trip.

[117] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, August 1847.

Following the Belgian section are several pages of studies and landscapes. 9105-54 shows a tunnel cutting through the side of a mountain. 9105-55-56 are studies of a nude model, showing Courbet's true interest in learning anatomy he often dismissed. 9105-58 is a study of a bearded man, wearing what appears to be a robe and in the pose of a river god. Also on this page is a study of an antique looking vase. The next page, 59, contains several more vases of different varieties. Next is a landscape labeled to be of the Cuisance, a river in the Jura. This is the first located page after Belgium. Perhaps Courbet went to Belgium from Paris, as he did when he traveled there in 1847. Accordingly, he might have returned to Paris after the trip (completing the sketch of the tunnel along the way), and done the model studies there, since it is known that Courbet went "to a life-model class at six o'clock every morning" in 1840.[118]Yet by 9105-60, he is back in Ornans. 9105-61 and 62 contain studies of characters, with multiple figures on each page.

The last pages of RF 9105 contain several sketches of the Lauterbrunnen Valley in Switzerland. It is unclear if Courbet returned to this site he had sketched earlier in the book (9105-35, 36), or perhaps sometimes drew on random pages which, knowing the artist's sometimes erratic behavior, would be less than surprising. The last sketches in the notebook, 9105-67 and 68, depict a hunter in a landscape and a woman praying, respectively. The back cover contains notes, perhaps another copied poem like at the end of 29234. Moreover, a page-by-page identification of the subjects and locations in each sketch has created both a time frame (1840-1842) and a proposed travel route. See the appendix of this thesis for a table of the locations and subjects depicted in the sketches, as well as a map roughly detailing Courbet's route.

[118] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his father, Paris, April 1840.

Now that the *when* and *where* of the notebooks have been established, the *why* can be explored. First, the relationship between the sketches and French Troubadour painting. The French Troubadour school emerged as a type of French Romanticism and emphasized the depiction of Medieval and Renaissance subjects and themes. One of the most reoccurring motifs in Courbet's sketchbooks is the rocky landscape. This includes caves, grottos, and mountains. This subject was also taken up by Troubadour painter Fleury Richard in *La Mort de Saint Paul Ermite.* Exhibited in the Salon of 1810, the work depicts a dramatic scene set within an enormous cave. Another resemblance between Courbet and Richard appears when examining Richard's own notebooks, which feature numerous studies of figures. Both artists' notebooks contain busts of women, and men in costumes or otherwise affected dress Compare Richard's *Etudes de Femme* (Fig. 24) with RF 9105-50 or 29234-5. RF 29234-5 contains a sketch of a woman and a man, both wearing traditional Bretagne costumes. RF-29234-20 contains several studies of faces. One of the heads on wears a turban, exhibiting an interest in exotic, arabesque figures. This figure could possibly be connected with the man in the turban pictured on the left-hand side of *L'Atelier du Peinture* (Fig. 25), which will be discussed later. Nevertheless, figures wearing regional costumes abound in the work of French Troubadour painter. Costumes of the East are particularly resonant, exemplified by a sketch by Pierre Révoil entitled *Saladin (*Fig. 25). The exotic and the arabesque are of course also a common motif among Romantic painters. One has only to look at the oeuvre of Delacroix to find numerous examples of men in turbans; one can look at anything from his larger scale paintings like *Massacre at Chios*, shown at the Salon of 1824 (Fig.27), to smaller works and drawings, like his sketches from Morocco and illustrations of Byron.[119] Though the figure of the man in the turban appears again only within

[119] Tom Prideaux, *The World of Delacroix: 1798-1863.* Time-Life Books Inc., 1966, 96

Courbet's *Atelier,* that the motif was on Courbet's consciousness ten years earlier is certainly significant.

While on the subject of Delacroix, there is one other example of overlap between the Romantic and Courbet. One of the first large paintings Courbet did when he came to Paris was *Walpurgis Night.*[120] Exhibited at the Salon of 1848, the work drew from *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The painting seems to have been an allegorical, and perhaps even humorous take on the tragedy. In 1828 an edition of *Faust* was published in French translation with illustrations done by Delacroix.[121] It was an unusual project for the artist, as he produced lithographs for the entire text, a total of 17. The prints were done in the height of Delacroix's Romantic style: emphasizing the drama and action of the work. Whether Courbet had seen these illustrations is unknown. However, a revival of Faust and Goethe amongst Parisian academics and artists could likely be connected to the 1828 publication.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to even directly compare Delacroix's *Faust* lithographs to Courbet's work. *Walpurgis Night* was painted over several years after its conception, when Courbet used the large canvas for his 1853 *the Wrestlers.* There is a chance that this choice was in part due to a desire to erase any connection between Courbet and the Romantics, as he began to strive for complete artistic autonomy in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Several other so-called Romantic compositions from the same time period as *Walpurgis Night,* including *The Man Delivered from Love by Death* and *Monk in a Cloister,* have also since disappeared.[122] Perhaps it is simply because he was cheap (as if often the explanation for Courbet's decisions during the early days in Paris). Yet the possibility remains, and it seems likely, that Courbet was attempting

[120] Georges Boudaille, *Gustave Courbet, Painter in Protest*. Translated by Michael Bullock, New York Graphic Society, 1969, 19.
[121] Prideaux, 90.
[122] Boudaille, 17.

to separate himself from other movements, any académie approved styles, or appearances of a teacher, similarly to how he requested that he not be listed as a student of August Hesse in the catalogue to the 1851 salon. Yet despite his continual efforts to prove otherwise, Courbet's work drew on the Romantic and Troubadour modes of painting, among other schools.

Another tradition that echoes through Courbet's notebooks is that of German art. As discussed earlier, Courbet often felt a kinship to the arts of Northern Europe, a feeling deeply rooted in his Franche-Comté, Northern, provincial identity. On trips to Belgium, Holland, and Germany, Courbet was pleased with their response to his art, recognizing it as a valuable market for him. This was especially important in the beginning of his career when he was not popular in the French metropolitan market of Paris. However, the German artistic sensibility seems to have left a deeper imprint on Courbet than often indicated. This is largely seen in the reoccurrence of landscape, both within the notebooks and throughout Courbet's oeuvre. Sketches like RF 9105-17, RF 9105-29, RF 29234-35 and many, many others include massive, staggering landscapes that often feature figures. They are staffage characters, included to indicate scale and perhaps even evoke a feeling of sublime grandeur so often conjured in depictions of mountainous landscapes: man amongst nature, man dwarfed by nature. The aforementioned sketches bring to mind works by German Romantic artists. Compare Courbet's sketches of mountains with German Romantic painter Carl Gustav Carus' *Saxon landscape* from 1824 (Fig. 28), and Caspar David Friedrich's *Landscape with Mountains* from 1811 (Fig. 29). Courbet likely was exposed to the work of these artists during his trips to Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium. It is confirmed that he visited a museum in Bruges, as that is where he sketched his study of Van Dyck's *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (RF 9105-49). It is also known that Courbet enjoyed going to exhibitions in Paris (even when he hated all the art), as well as visiting the Louvre to copy old master paintings.

One could therefore postulate that Courbet visited museums while on his travel routes, gathering artistic inspiration along the way.

The Nazarene painting tradition is a product of the Napoleonic era, a Catholic-infused iteration of German Romanticism that began when artists studying in Vienna formed the Brotherhood of St. Luke as a response against the constricting rules of the Academy.[123] Inspired by the German Gothic, Orthodox Catholicism, and Italian art, the Brotherhood of St. Luke was largely a reaction against French Neoclassicism, and a desire to return to an earlier style of painting they saw to be more truthful. These aspirations created a style that was more primitive, drawing largely from Italian and German Renaissance artists like Raphael and Durer.

Influence of the Nazarene school on Courbet's imagination occurs in the sketchbooks in his study of Gothic architecture. Interest and depiction of the Gothic is associated with a more Romantic sensibility. Nineteenth century depictions of the French Gothic are imbued with a national pride and nostalgia much like Romantic landscapes. Both are meant to evoke an idealized past. This is also seen in German schools like the ever-nostalgic Nazarene. The Gothic is a perennial motif within the Nazarene imagination. Take for example Johann Friedrich Overbeck's *Portrait of the Painter Franz Pforr* (Fig.30) The Gothic buildings and church seen through the window enhance the sense of tradition and history typical to the Nazerene sensibility. During his visit to Normandy, Courbet was extremely stuck by the Gothic architecture of the region. He even mentioned the architecture in his letters as well, within several other comments about his trip to Normandy: "a charming countryside, both for its rich vegetation and for its picturesque sites and gothic monuments, which can compare to the best of

[123] *German Masters of the Nineteenth Century: Paintings and Drawings from the Federal Republic of Germany*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981, 16.

its kind."[124] In Rouen Courbet executed a painstakingly detailed sketch of the architecture of Rouen Cathedral (29234-9-12), as well as the Fountaine de la Croix de Pierre, the oldest example of Gothic architecture in Rouen. Sketches done elsewhere evoke the Gothic and Nazarene imagination as well. 9105- 6, 15, 18, and 37 all utilize the Romantic motif of showing landscape through some sort of structure, a window (15), doorway (6, 18), or oculus (37).

Attention to architecture is barely ever seen in Courbet's oeuvre, largely due to the fact that the overwhelming majority of his works are set outside. *After Dinner at Ornans* (Fig.18) and *L'Atelier* (Fig. 25) stand out as the biggest exceptions. However, in these interior scenes the rooms are either dark and smoky (*After Dinner)* or cavernous and hazy (*L'Atelier*). Though Gothic architecture does not appear in Courbet's finished paintings or later work, his sketches indicate at least an interest in their representation.

A trope that reoccurs in both Romanticism and Nazarene painting is the landscape with ruins. The motif of the picturesque, classically affected landscape was particularity popular in the nineteenth century. One only has to glance at the oeuvre of German Romanticist Caspar David Friedrich to find countless examples of ruins being placed in a landscape. Noteworthy works include *Abbey Amidst Oak Trees* (Fig. 31) and *Cloister Ruin at Eldena* (Fig. 32). For Friedrich, the ruin functions as a memento mori within the composition, representing the eventual degradation and disappearance of all things, even structures built to withstand the ages. Similar to the depiction of the Gothic, ruins in a landscape often act as a nostalgic reminder of past glory. It is therefore not surprising that they too were a popular subject matter in the nineteenth century, when the world was getting more and more industrial.

[124] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, spring/summer, 1841

Within Courbet's oeuvre no examples of landscapes with ruins can be found in finished paintings. However, several appear in the notebooks: RF 29234-18, RF 29234-39, and RF 9105-18. The nineteenth century French picturesque often depicts figures in the countryside enjoying leisure time. This is accomplished using staffage figures and setting compositions within recognizable tourist destinations. 9105-42 to 45 exemplify these principles. Multiple figures mingle, play, and rest in the serenity of a forest park. The figures are barely demarcated, seemingly only representing types. 9105-29 also evokes the notion of the picturesque. Tiny figures stand before an enormous cliff and waterfall. They appear to be tourists, and the location would likely have been familiar to a French nineteenth century viewer of the sketch. Courbet therefore draws on the motif of the picturesque, as well as the tradition of tourist prints and paintings that became popular as the industrialization of the nineteenth century left Europeans craving contact with the natural world.

However, several noteworthy artistic choices separate Courbet's landscapes from being exactly the same as Romantic picturesque landscapes. Petra Chu best articulated the subtle but distinct difference between Courbet's landscapes and those of 19th century picturesque. In comparison to the Romantic tradition of the *Voyages Pittoresque* (Fig. 33), where artists created timeless images that conveyed to the viewer a sense of having visited the site, Courbet's attention lay in capturing a single moment, and producing a more physical reaction in the reader: "Courbet tried to convey in his painting something of the total sensual reality of the landscape. This includes, most importantly, engaging the viewer's tactile sense."[125] Courbet's characteristic focus on proximity creates a more singular experience than the desired universality of the *Voyages Pittoresque.* Likely, this ability is largely due to Courbet's personal experience with

[125] Chu, "The Purposeful Sightseer", 13.

landscape during his childhood in Ornans. His knowledge of rural life and first-hand experience *within* landscape consequently allow him to present a less idealized and more urgent landscape, while still capturing is inherent beauty. This blend is an example of the Romantic-Realist sensibilities of Courbet. Though Courbet's notebooks indicate the presence of the picturesque within Courbet's artistic imagination, Courbet's execution of landscape differs from the typical picturesque. The combination of styles therefore creates something new altogether.

Another example of the picturesque in Courbet's notebooks is *Hunter in landscape*—RF 9105-67. This sketch depicts a man dressed in traditional hunting attire standing with a dog. Behind him are tall jagged mountains. The figure is placed within the landscape, close to the foreground. The sketch appears to have been completed from a lower vantage point or manipulated to create this effect. The figure's placement in the sketch renders him almost as tall as the mountains. Despite the largeness of the hunter in relation to his environment, the figure holds no narrative beside that of his assumed "type", he is a hunter in the countryside, an affluent person enjoying his leisure time out in nature. This depiction certainly falls closer to the picturesque than the realist. Courbet has expressed an interest in the picturesque in his letters. Upon first moving to Paris, he mentioned that he had visited the palace of Versailles. Moreover, he found himself drawn more to the palace, and specifically its outdoor elements, than he had been to Paris: "I find that the palace, museum, and park of Versailles impressed me more than Paris did when I first arrived here."[126]

Courbet's incorporation of subject matter and imagery associated with the French Troubadour, German Romantic, and Nazarene schools completely refutes his rejection of "historical art" detailed in his Manifesto: "Every age should be represented only by its own

[126] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, December 26, 1839.

artists, that is to say, by the artists who have lived in it…It is in this sense that I deny the possibility of historical art." The Louvre Notebooks are full of insight and influence, too much for a single thesis. However, the many appearances of Romanticism, the picturesque, and various Northern schools of art within the notebooks is striking. A comparison between this newly revealed imagination, Courbet's private artistic language, and the work he was creating and exhibiting publicly at the same time and afterwards, provides insight into the paradoxical nature of the Romantic Realist.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

> In your sympathetic retreat I will contemplate the spectacle of your sea. The viewpoints of the mountains also offer us the limitless spectacle of immensity. The unfillable void has a calming effect. I confess, poet, I love terra firma and the orchestration of the countless herds that inhabit our mountains.[127]

Courbet's accomplished early work *Self Portrait with Black Dog* (Fig.12) has already been discussed on a technical level and placed as a key transitionary work within Courbet's oeuvre. Returning to the painting after spending some time considering the Louvre Notebooks suggests another level of meaning to the piece. In *Self Portrait with Black Dog*, Courbet depicts himself as a Comté gentleman, simultaneously place above and imbedded within his native landscape. He regards the viewer with a look of utmost pride and ease. Arranged around him are the motifs that will reoccur in his work for the next thirty-sum years: the dog, the pipe, the Ornans landscape, and the walking stick. Behind him is a sketchbook. It is important to remember that this was Courbet's first painting to hang in the Salon. Courbet is therefore introducing himself to Paris through the work, using his own appearance as well as the objects surrounding him. If *Self Portrait with Black Dog* is as a statement of Courbet's identity in the early 1840s, the appearance of the sketchbook becomes even more important. The portrait shows him as a student, gathering inspiration and reference material. He's a traveler as well, indicated

[127] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Victor Hugo, Salins, November 28, 1640.
Written to Victor Hugo when he was in exile on the island of Guernsey.

by the walking stick. The self-portrait shows who Courbet was at the time he completed RF 9105 and RF 29234. Courbet painted *Self Portrait with Black Dog* in Paris, but the subject matter had clearly been garnered while in Ornans.[128] Within RF 29234 are several pages containing motifs also in *Self Portrait with Black Dog*. There are several sketches of dogs in the notebook (52,53), as well as a crossed out self- portrait of a man with a pipe and a completed sketch of a man with a similar expression as the artist's in *Self Portrait with Black Dog* (23, 22) (Fig.24). This work is not the only to contain imagery also in the notebooks. Further examination of certain sketches supports the characterization of Courbet's trips home as opportunities to gather material for paintings that would then be completed in Paris. The aspects of the notebooks that do not appear in Courbet's oeuvre have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, like this discussion of *Self Portrait with Black Dog* it is time to extricate the images from the notebooks that echo across Courbet's oeuvre.

Several motifs found in the notebooks reappear almost identically in finished works. A seated figure depicted in 29234-15 bears a striking resemblance to one of the men in *After Dinner at Ornans* (Fig. 35). A similar thing happens with a figure on page 9105-62, where a sketch of a woman holding a kerchief to her mouth calls to mind the female mourners in *Burial at Ornans* (Fig. 36). On pages 9105-38 and 61 figures echoes of two figures from *L'Atelier* (Fig. 37, 38). Whether any of these were actually completed as preparatory sketches is impossible to know. It is more likely that certain types and motifs had begun to catch the young artist's attention and persisted in his imagination, finally reappearing in his more mature work. The notebooks can therefore be seen as a look into Courbet's process as he begins to build a visual vocabulary that he will maintain throughout his entire career. This practice is articulated best by

[128] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, March 1844.

Michael Fried: "Nothing is more typical of Courbet's oeuvre than the repetition or reuse throughout all phases of his career and often with only slight variation, of a number of highly specific and, to put it bluntly, extremely peculiar motifs, bodily positions, facial expressions, compositional structures, and the like".[129]

One of the most resounding lessons that can be garnered from the Louvre Notebooks is the enduring fascination Courbet held for landscape. An artist who once visited Courbet's studio commented in his memoirs: "He was more interested in the harmony than the richness of the colours, a quality, in fact, which stayed with him until the end of his career. Never…did we see him do a whole figure, he studied only parts."[130] We certainly see this in the notebooks, in pages like RF 9105-59 or RF 29234-20 which contain several studies of different thing: faces, vessels, animals. In what seems like Courbet's typical drawing style, these sketches are quick, stereotypical, almost rushed. Yet the times in which Courbet's sketches are most focused, coherent, and original in the notebooks are on the landscape pages. Particular types of landscape that Courbet focused on in the sketchbooks are equally prominent in his work: especially waterfalls and mountains landscapes. One could certainly argue that the landscapes are where Courbet is the most Realist, depicting things precisely as they are.

Though some images from RF 9105 and RF 29234 appear almost directly in other works, as discussed earlier, other motifs explored in the notebooks are not seen anywhere else. The unusual appearance of the picturesque has been discussed at length. Though some Courbet early works and landscapes could perhaps be regarded as picturesque-influenced, none are as blatant in their inspiration as his sketches that feature ruins or staffage figures. Consequently, the role of the figure is the biggest difference between landscapes in the sketchbook and landscapes in

[129] Fried, 57.
[130] Riat, 31.

finished paintings. Compare a page like 9105-67 with a painting from around the same time, *Le Gros Chêne* (Fig.11), for example. Page depicts an anonymous figure meant to represent an entire type, integrated within a landscape. *Le Gros Chêne,* on the other hand, though still depicting figures at leisure in nature, draws them closer to the foreground, creating a more pertinent image. Like the hunter on 9105-67 the man lying on the ground has his back to the viewer. Attention is payed to the facial expression of the woman, though, and she bears a unique countenance. There is moreover a large difference between Courbet's private depiction of a more pastoral-affected landscape, and his public composition that provides his figures with more agency.

Conversely, some motifs that are prominent to Courbet's finished work seldom appear in his notebooks. Primarily, the notebooks lack the focus on self-portraiture that Courbet's public work had at the time. This is one of the biggest differences between Courbet's public and private vocabulary. The lack of self-portraiture in the notebooks reinforces the idea that they were largely a marketing tool during the 1840s, a way for Courbet's face to become familiar to the Parisian art scene. Exceptions include 29234-22, which includes a sketch of the typical Courbet self-portrait with pipe. What looks like an exploration into the same topic has been crossed out on 29234-27. Another exception is a drawing held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. *Self-Portrait with Upraised Arm* (Fig. 41). More finished than the majority of the sketches in the Louvre notebooks, *Self-Portrait with Upraised Arm* shows a surprising side of Courbet in its attention to anatomical detail. One can certainly note the influence of Nicolas-Auguste Hesse's neoclassical style and Courbet's attendance of model-drawing at Académie Suisse.

The line drawn between Realism and Romanticism is often overly definitive. In reality, the two movements have a much closer and overlapping relationship, one that is more

ambiguous. The work of Gustave Courbet perfectly articulates the intersections between the two styles. Though tensions between Romantic and Realist painters were co-opted by philosophers and scholars like Proudhon and Gautier, in many ways they had more in common than what is originally thought, proven by Courbet's work and source material. Marcel Brion describes the Romantic painter as close to the Realist: "the Romantic painter is truly a 'man of his time' because the events which occur around him awaken a resonant echo in him."[131] If the overall goal is the same, then perhaps the only difference between the Romantic and the Realist then is their methods. Much is said about Courbet's rough and unconventional handling of paint, especially in relation to his use of the palette knife. But we also know that Courbet constructed his compositions on dark base layers in the style of the Old Masters.[132] Moreover, it seems that in both his approaches and his goals, Courbet can only be accurately described as a Romantic Realist.

Courbet's position as the Romantic Realist is largely made possible by the alienation he felt within the French art world. Though he also admitted at times that it upset him, the artist clearly embraced being an outsider even in his home country. In a letter to Francis Wey and his wife Courbet proudly declared: "No doubt I will always lack the qualities of tact, of good manners, and of French politeness."[133] This feeling of disconnect towards his own national identity certainly would have made Courbet more susceptible to the styles of other countries. In another letter written a year later Courbet remarks on his success in Northern Europe: "I have just come back from two countries where I have had complete success: Belgium and Bavaria. Those artists are independent..."[134] Through his travels, as indicated by the notebooks, Courbet

[131] Brion, 134
[132] Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin. *Courbet Reconsidered*. Brooklyn Museum, 1988, 1.
[133] Gustave Courbet, Letter to M. and Mms Francis Wey, Ornans, Match 10, 1850.
[134] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Jules de La Rochenoire, Ornans, March 4, 1870.

allowed his artistic sensibilities to be shaped. As soon as they were shaped and his style was formed, however, he began to deny these influences. Courbet completely disavows German art in his later letters. In 1869 he writes to Jules Castagnary:

> There is almost no good painting in Germany. They are all concerned with the negative qualities of art. One of the principal qualities is perspective. They talk about it all day long. Another important quality is the accuracy of historical costumes. They are very much into anecdotal painting… they are all the same.[135]

This complete rejection of German art rings familiar, sounding just like Courbet's rejection of the Hesse, or the Old Masters, whom Courbet also learned a great deal from. Moreover, the Louvre notebooks clearly show that what makes Courbet's mature style distinctive is not simply an outright rejection of all that came before. What makes him a Romantic Realist is the composite diversity of his sources.

[135] Gustave Courbet, Letter to Jules Castagnary, Interlaken, November 20, 1869.

CONCLUSION

COURBET THE ROMANTIC REALIST

> If I had to make a choice among countries, I admit that I would not choose my own. That is why I have begun with it. Besides, in life one learns above all from adversity. There is also a saying that one must try new things from time to time in order to be truthful, for you know that truth changes with the times.[136]

There is a third notebook held in the Louvre Cabinet Dessins. Starkly different from RF 9105 and RF 29234, RF 29235 is the last journal of the three. The notebook contains only two locations, and they are neither tourist destinations nor are they in Courbet's home department. The first is Sainte Pélagie, the prison in Paris where Courbet was held after his involvement in the Paris commune and the destruction of the Vendome column (29235-6). Courbet also painted a depiction of himself in prison: *Self-Portrait at Sainte-Pélagie.* The other location in RF-29235 is the stables of the Palace of Versailles, where the Fédérés were held (29235-7). The two locations represent the shift that Courbet's life and priorities underwent during the end of career, and some of his most politically charged work. Courbet's life ended in tragic circumstances, exiled and ill in La Tour-de-Peilz, Switzerland.

This June will mark the 200th anniversary of Gustave Courbet's birth. Hopefully it will prompt a renewal of interest in the artist. First and foremost is the pressing need to update Courbet's Catalogue Raisonné, which still exists only in one edition, compiled by Robert Fernier and published in 1978. Since publication many new Courbet works have been discovered, while

[136] Gustave Courbet, Letter to M. and Mme Francis Wey, Dijon, July 31, 1850

other previously attributed paintings have had their authentication revoked. A Catalogue Raisonné is the cornerstone on which all scholarship can be built, and an updated edition would therefore likely prompt to a wave of new and exciting work. Moreover, much more inquiry could be done into Courbet's early compositions, source material, and notebooks. This thesis merely scratched the surface of the vast amount of information held by the Louvre notebooks. Many pages contain notes that are completely inscrutable but could likely provide more information about the locations and circumstances of certain sketches. Moreover, the amount of simultaneous overlap and separation that exist between these notebooks and Courbet's public oeuvre demands further examination. That the notebooks can contain exact figures that later appear within finished paintings, as well as motifs that can be found nowhere in the artist's catalog is as strange as it is intriguing.

Examination of Courbet's notebooks from the 1840s can potentially create a sense of confusion. Courbet appears contradictory, schizophrenic, even. Indeed, there are many irreconcilable dichotomies between what Courbet was sketching and what he was sending to the Salons. Yet there are also many similarities. The reoccurring characters, and ever-present landscape connect his public and private life. Describing the wedding of a friend in a letter home, Courbet quipped: "it was I who represented Ornans."[137] And indeed, it seems that this was always Courbet's role. Though I had no intention of visiting Courbet's late work, one comparison is worth mentioning. Let us first return to one of the earliest known paintings by Courbet, *La Loue vers Ornans* (Fig. 42). The sky over the river Loue is a fiery red dappled with orange, reflected in the water. Now consider *Sunset on Lake Geneva* (Fig. 43). Painted in 1874 after Courbet's exile, the work seems to directly reference that sunset in Ornans from thirty years

[137] Gustave Courbet, Letter to his family, Paris, March 1844.

before. Courbet juxtaposes the same burnt orange clouds and bright blue sky. The facture is the same, confident horizontal strokes accentuated with white highlights and the orange reflections. The similarities between where Courbet began and ended his career are striking. Courbet constantly returned to the same subject matter and vocabulary throughout his life, consistently drawing from the imagination he developed as a young artist, as demonstrated in the Louvre Notebooks. One can observe a sort of cyclical movement within Courbet's entire oeuvre. Despite what Courbet said about reality or teachers, he consistently returned to depicting what he knew best: the rural landscape, the waterfall, the country woman, the dog. The itinerary plotted out in chapter three comes to mind. Though Courbet would travel, he unfailingly returned to Ornans. A parallel motion of cyclical movement, expansion and contraction, can be imagined. Again, and again Courbet would return to *la source* for inspiration. The visual vocabulary and Romantic imagination can be traced from the 1840s notebooks all the way to his literal (and figurative) sunset paintings. Courbet's types, love of landscape, and Romantic Realist sensibilities are built in the 1840s and carried into the masterpieces of the 1850s. After all, what is Courbet painting in his opus: *The Artist's Studio, A Real Allegory Summing up Seven Years of my Artistic and Moral Life?* A Comptoise landscape.

FIGURES

Fig. 1. Jean-Baptiste Regnault. *The Three Graces.* 1793. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 2. Claude-Antoine Beau, *Gustave Courbet en Saint Vernier,* 1837. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 3. Claude-Antoine Beau. *Vue d'Ornans.* 1835. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 4. Claude-Antoine Beau. *Vue d'Ornans, la leçon de peinture.* 1835. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 5. Gustave Courbet, *La Loue vers Ornans,* 1838. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 6. Gustave Courbet., *Le Pont de Nahin,* 1837. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 7. Nicolas-Auguste Hesse, *Swooning of the Virgin*, 1838. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

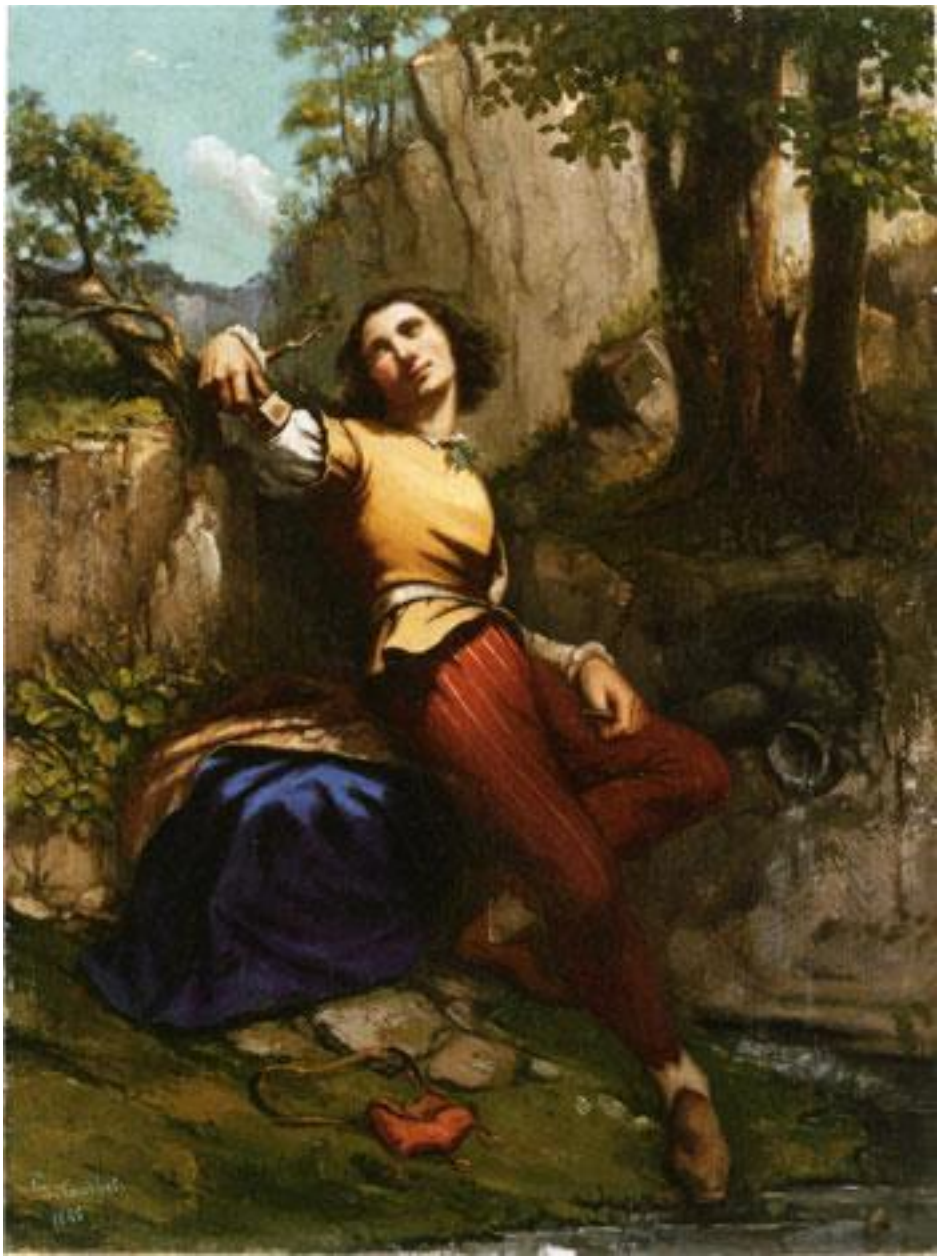


Fig. 8. Gustave Courbet, *The Sculptor*, 1844. Private Collection.

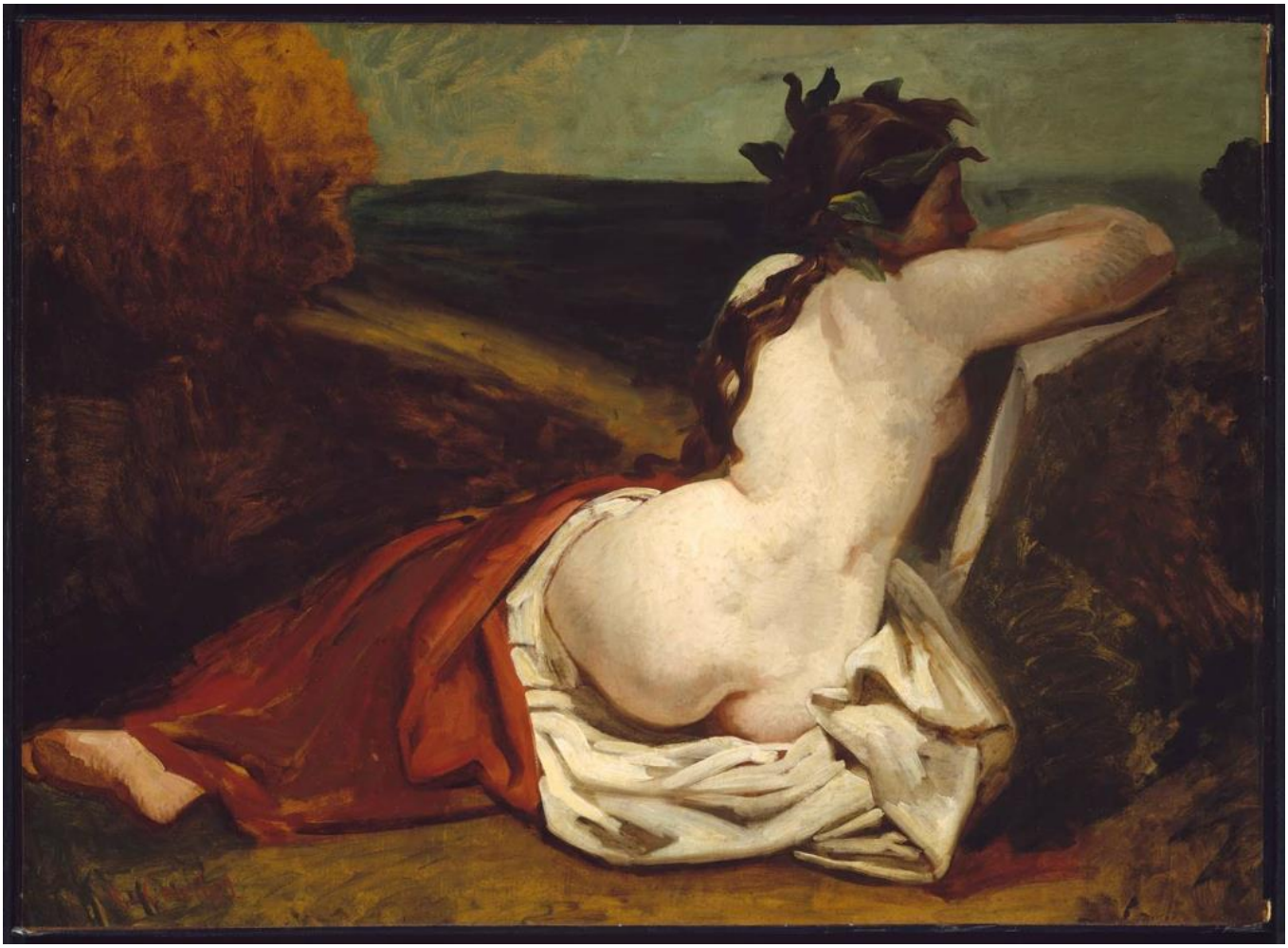


Fig. 9. Gustave Courbet, *Reclining Nude*, 1840-41. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Fig. 10. Gustave Courbet, *La Sieste*,1841-42. Private collection.

Fig. 11. Gustave Courbet, *Le Gros Chêne,* 1843. Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine.

Fig. 12. Gustave Courbet, *Self Portrait with Black Dog*, 1842. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris.

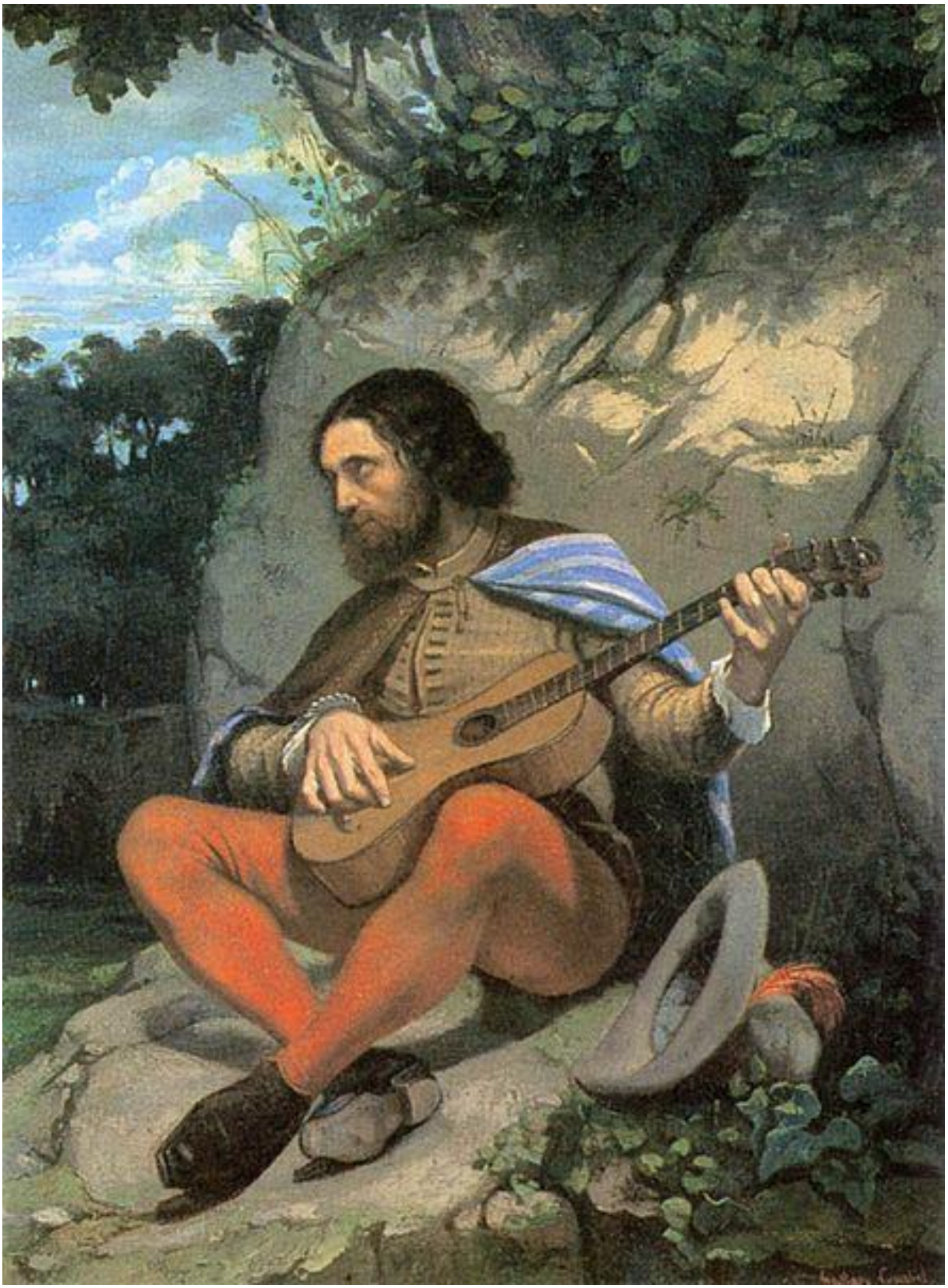


Fig. 13. Gustave Courbet, *Young Man in a Landscape* (*The Guitarrero),* 1844. Private Collection

Fig. 14. Gustave Courbet, *The Man with the Leather Belt (Portrait of Monsieur Xxx)*, 1845-46. Musée D'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 15. Gustave Courbet, *Joueurs de Dames*, 1844. Private Collection.

Fig. 16. Gustave Courbet, *Les Amants dans la Campagne,* 1844. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris.

Fig. 17. Gustave Courbet, *La Rencontre (Bonjour Monsieur Courbet)*, 1854, Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France.

Fig. 18. Gustave Courbet, *After Dinner at Ornans,* 1848-1849. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France.

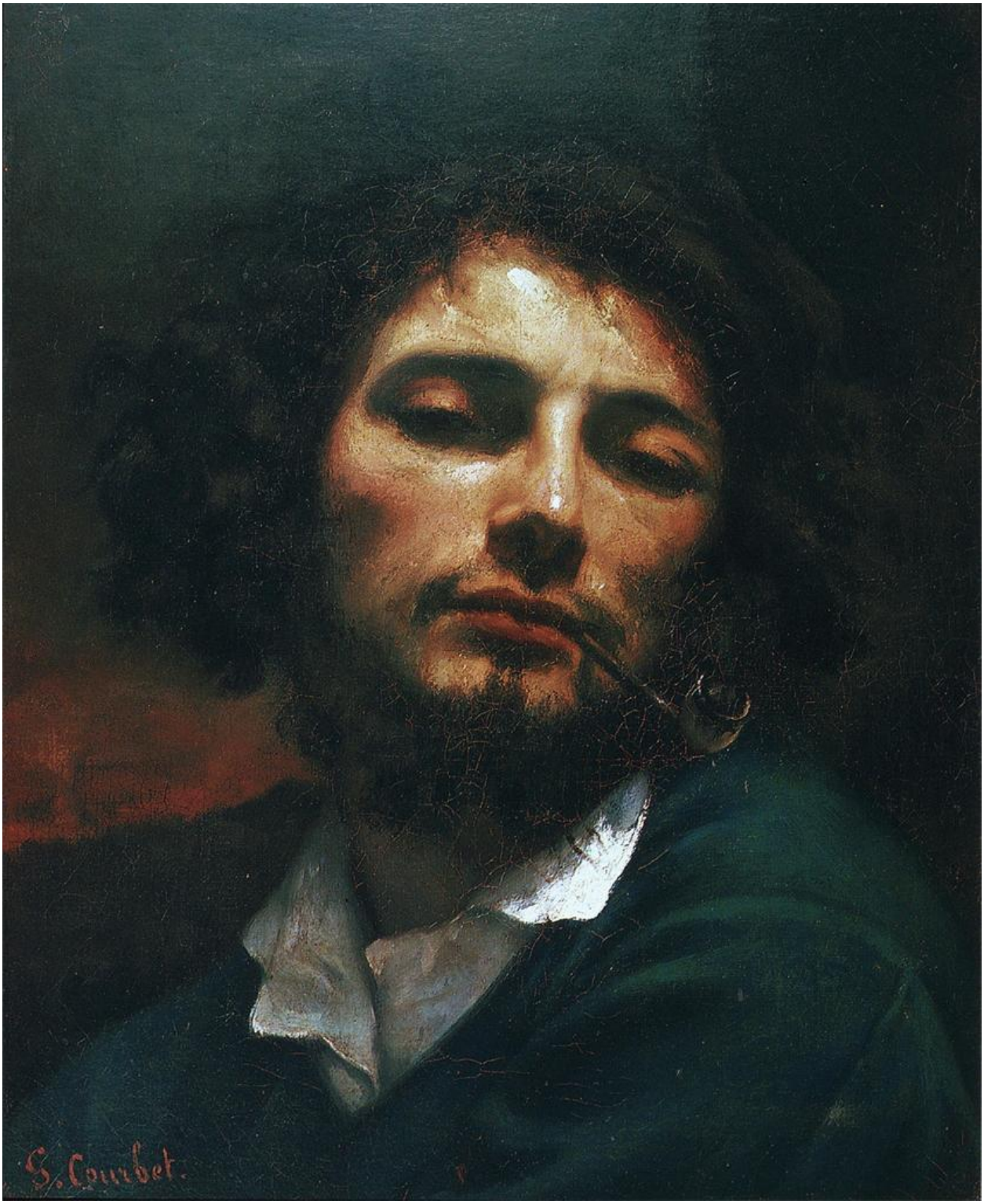


Fig. 19. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of the artist (Man with a pipe)*, 1848-49. Musée Fabre, Montpellier, France.

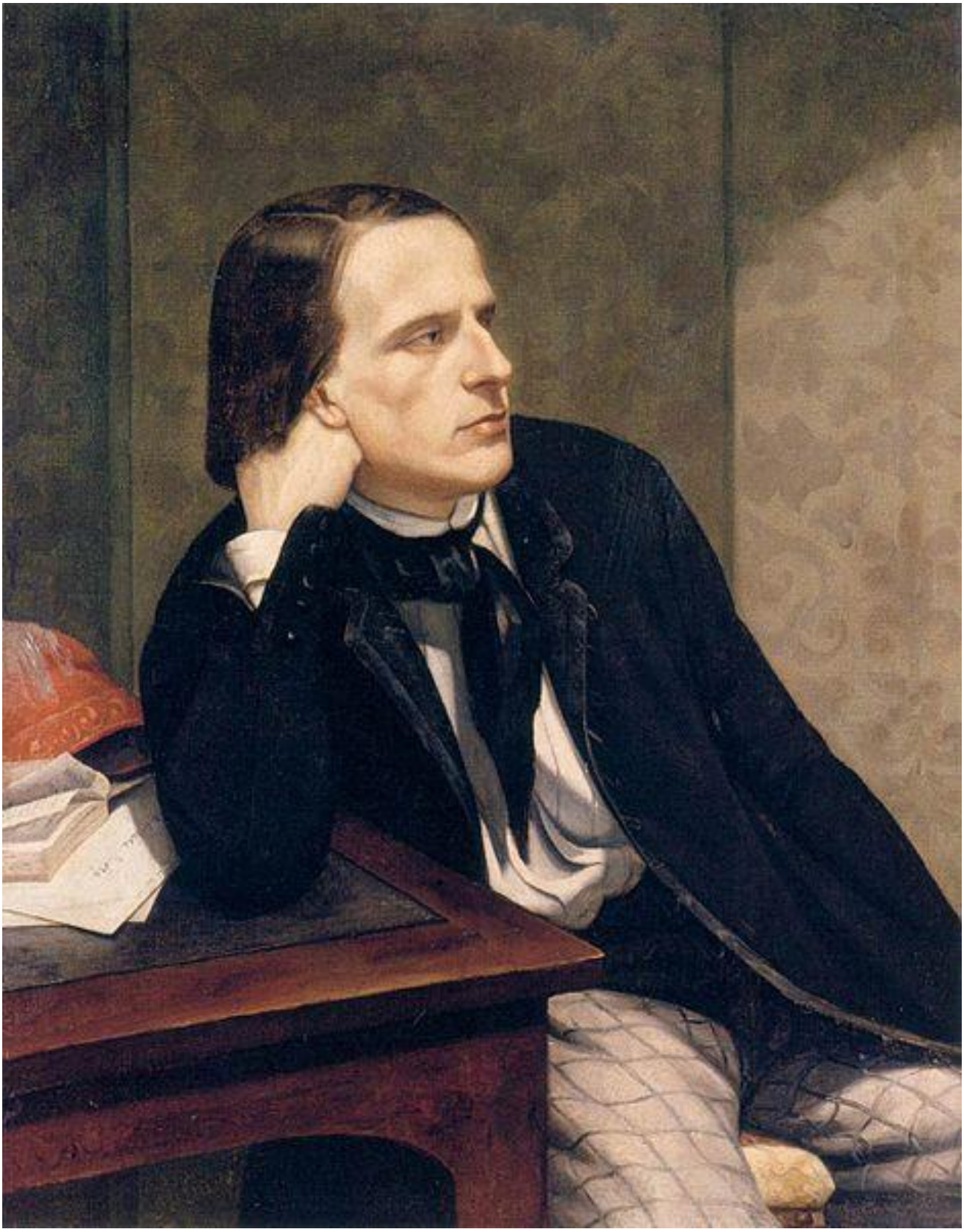


Fig. 20. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of Paul Ansout*, 1842-1843. Chateau Musée de Dieppe, Dieppe, France.

Fig. 21. Gustave Courbet, *Portrait of H. J. van Wisselingh*, 1846. Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

Fig. 22. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers.* 1849. Destroyed in 1945 during the bombing of Dresden.

Fig. 23. Gustave Courbet, *Burial at Ornans,*1849-50. Musée D'Orsay, Paris.

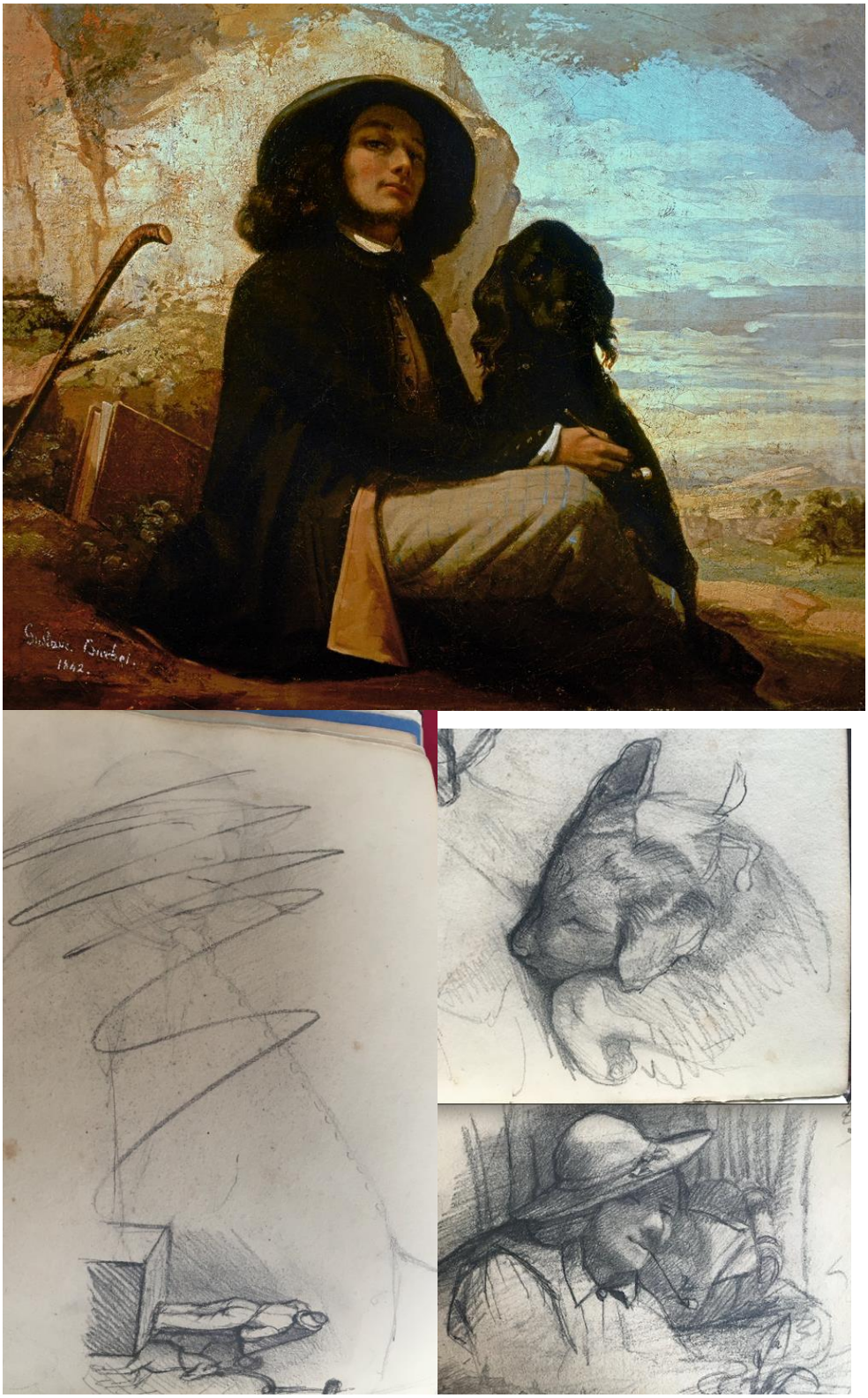


Fig. 24. Gustave Courbet *Self Portrait with Black Dog,* 1842. Musée du Petit Palais, Paris. Gustave Courbet, RF 29234 (clockwise) 27, 52, 22, 1841, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris

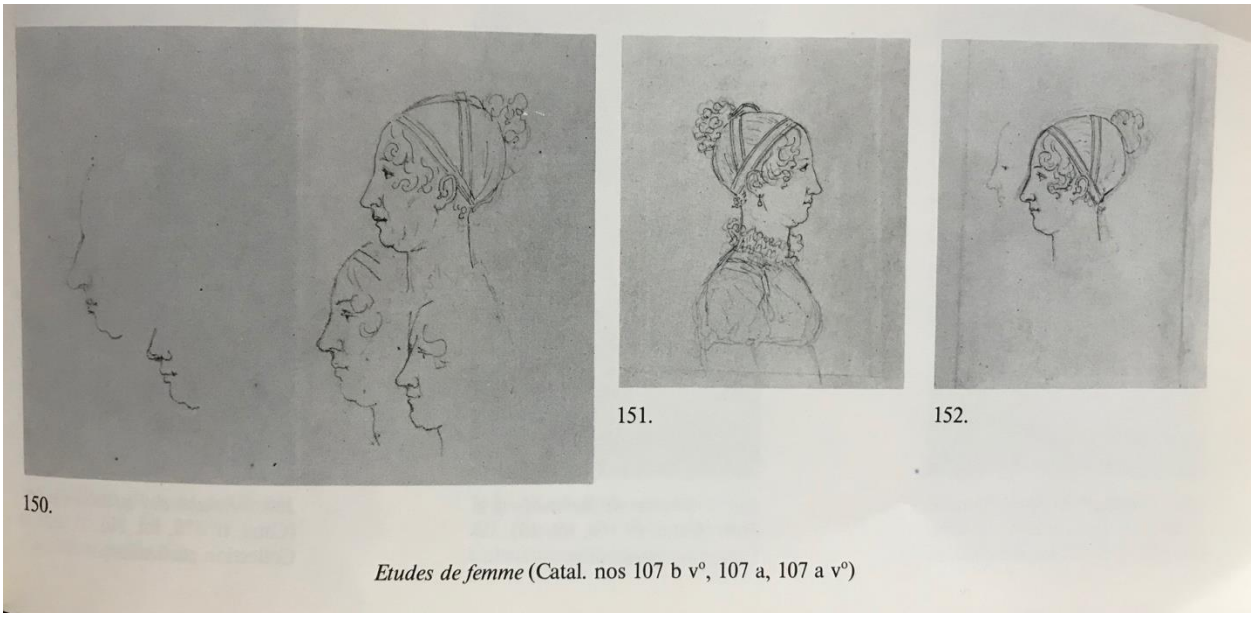


Fig. 25. Fleury Richard, *Etudes de Femme.* Private Collection.


Fig. 26. Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier (The Artist's Studio, A Real Allegory Summing up Seven Years of my Artistic and Moral Life* 1855. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 27. Pierre Révoil, *Saladin.* Private Collection.

Fig. 28. Eugène Delacroix, *Massacre at Chios*, 1824. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 29. Carl Gustav Carus, *Sächsische Landschaft, Sonnenstein bei Pirna,* 1824. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany.

Fig. 30. Caspar David Friedrich, *Landscape in the Riesengebirge (Landscape with Mountains),* 1810-11. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moskva, Russia.

Fig. 31. Johann Friedrich Overbeck, *Portrait of the Painter Franz Pforr,* 1810. Nationalgalerie and Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany

Fig. 32. Caspar David Friedrich, *Abbey Amidst Oak Trees,* 1809-10. Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany.

Fig. 33. Caspar David Friedrich, *Cloister Ruin at Eldena,* 1825. Nationalgalerie and Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, Germany.

Fig. 34. Louis-Marie-Jean-Baptiste Atthalin *Tour de Neauffle: Voyages pittoresque en France*, 19th century. Davison Art Center, Wesleyan University.

Fig. 35. Gustave Courbet, *After Dinner at Ornans,* 1848-1849. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille. Gustave Courbet, RF 29234-15, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.

Fig. 36. Gustave Courbet, RF 9105-62, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.
Gustave Courbet, *Burial at Ornans (Detail)* 1849-50. Musée D'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 37. Gustave Courbet, RF 9105-38, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.
Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier (The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life)*, 1855. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Fig. 38. Gustave Courbet, *L'Atelier (The Painter's Studio: A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life),* 1855. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
Gustave Courbet, RF 9105-61, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.

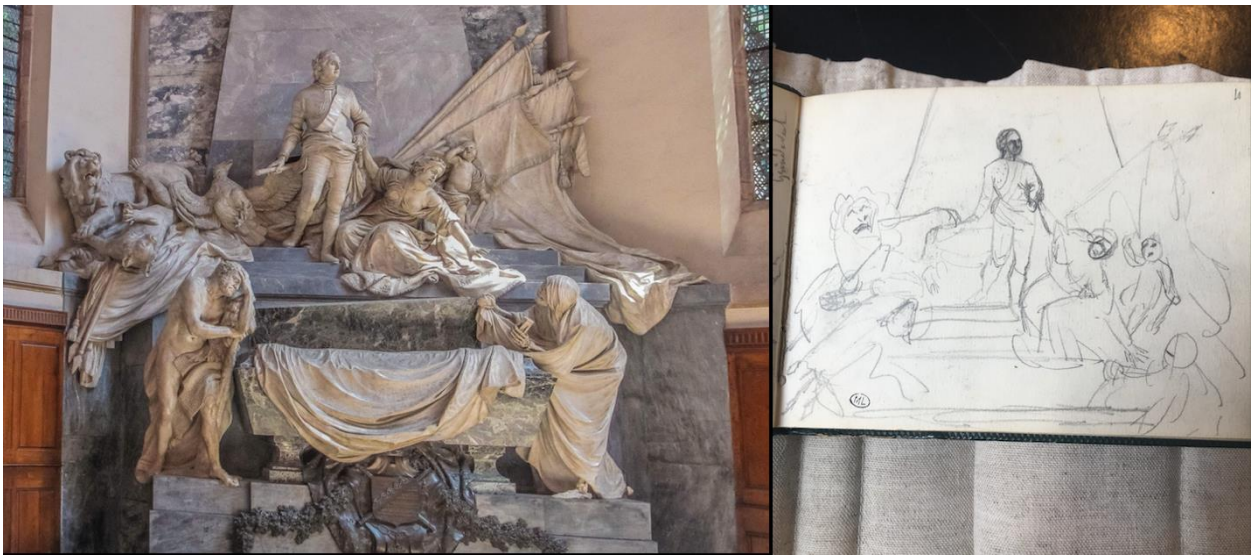


Fig. 39. Jean-Baptiste Pigalle, *Tomb of Marshall Maurice of Saxony,* St Thomas' Church, Strasbourg, France.
Gustave Courbet, RF 9105-8, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.

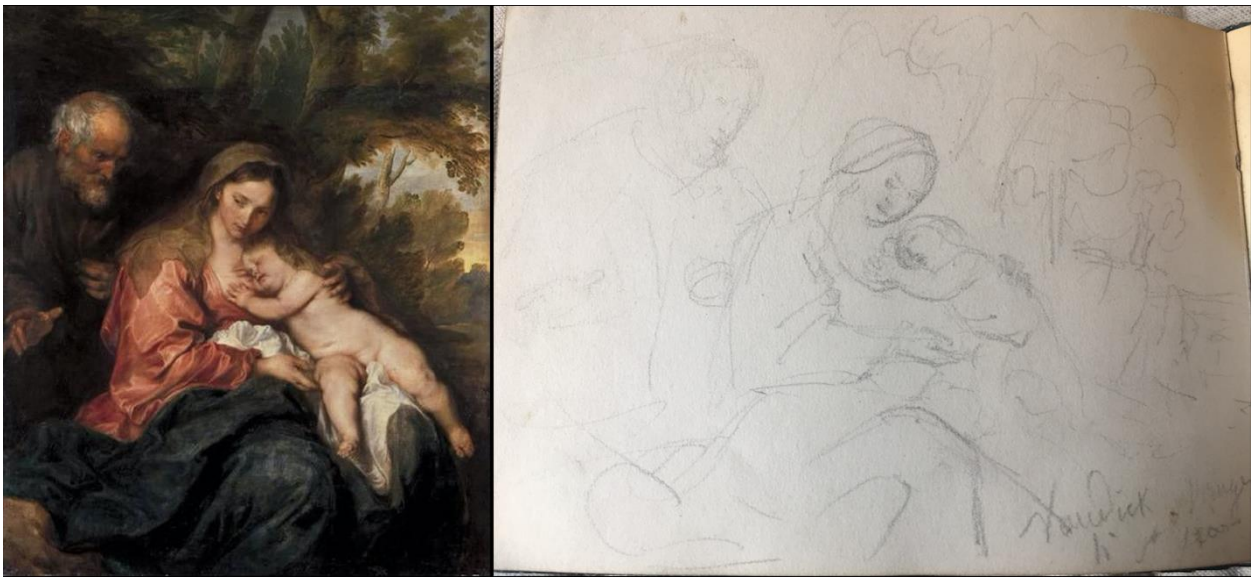


Fig. 40. Anthony van Dyck, The Rest on The Flight into Egypt, 1630. Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany.
Gustave Courbet, RF 9105-49, Louvre Cabinet des Dessins, Paris.

Fig. 41. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait with Upraised Arm*, 1840. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 42. Gustave Courbet, *La Loue vers Ornans,* 1838. Musée Courbet, Ornans, France.

Fig. 43. Gustave Courbet, *Sunset on Lake Geneva,* 1874. Musée Jenisch, Vevey, Switzerland.

APPENDIX

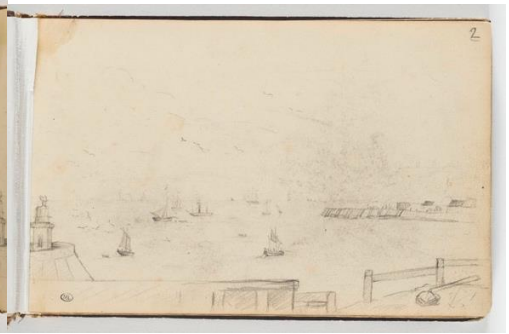
I. THE LOUVRE NOTEBOOKS

RF 29234
Gustave Courbet, 1841-1842, Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

RF 29234-1

RF 29234-2

RF 29234-3



RF 29234-4

RF 29234-5

RF 29234-6

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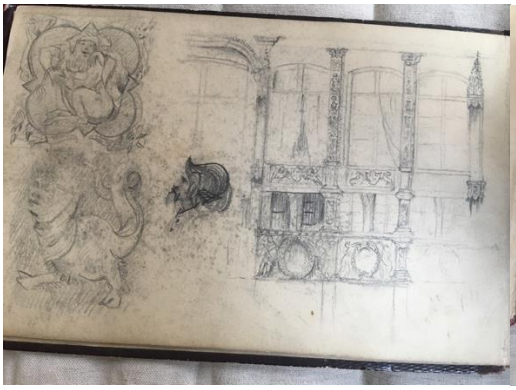
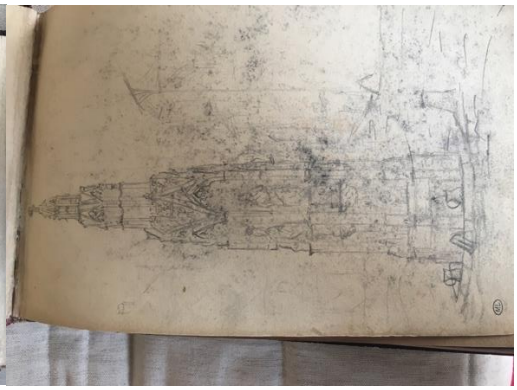
RF 29234-10

RF 29234-11

RF 29234-12



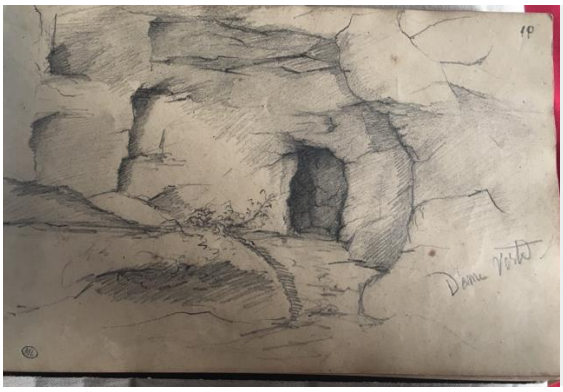
RF 29234-13



RF 29234-14

RF 29234-15

RF 29234-16



RF 29234-17

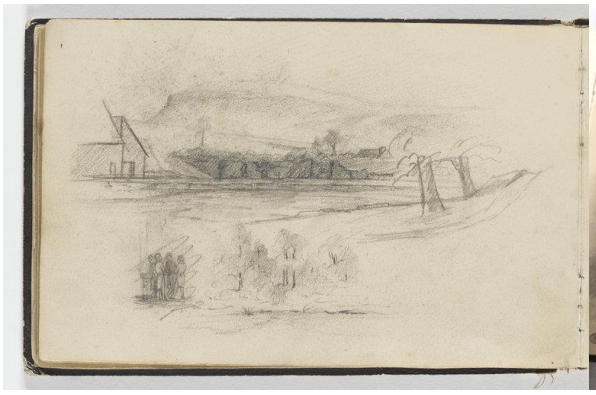
RF 29234-18

RF 29234-19

RF 29234-20

RF 29234-21

RF 29234-22



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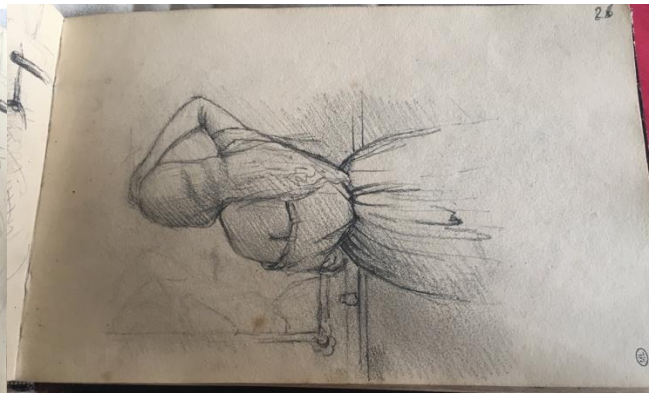

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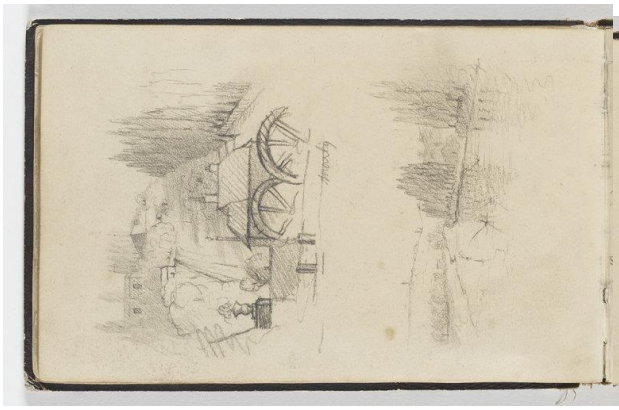

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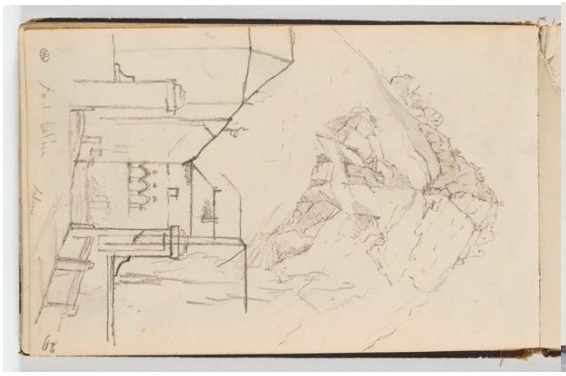

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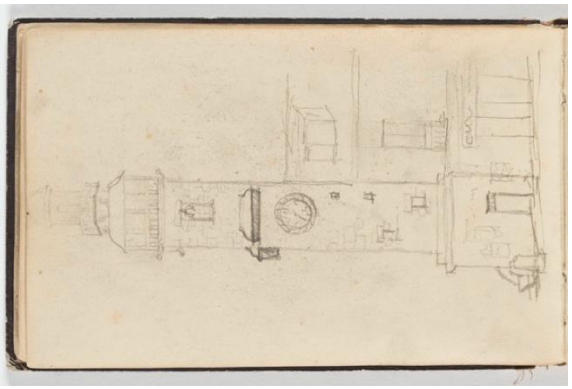

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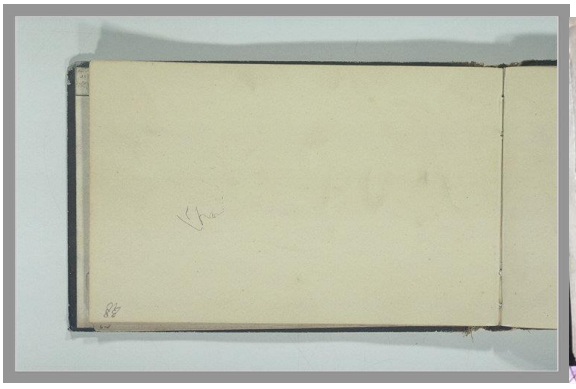

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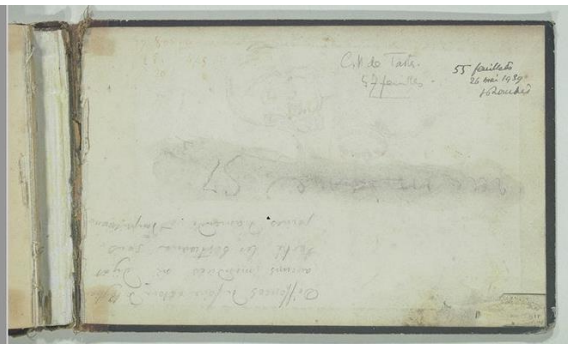

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Gustave Courbet, 1842-1843, Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

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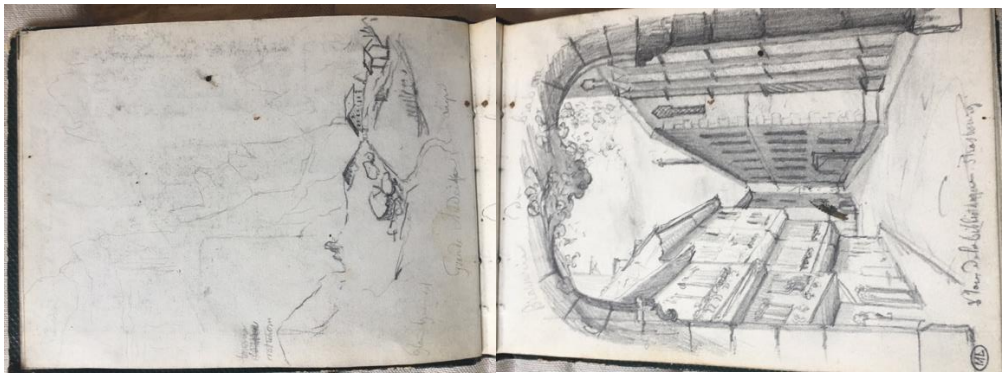

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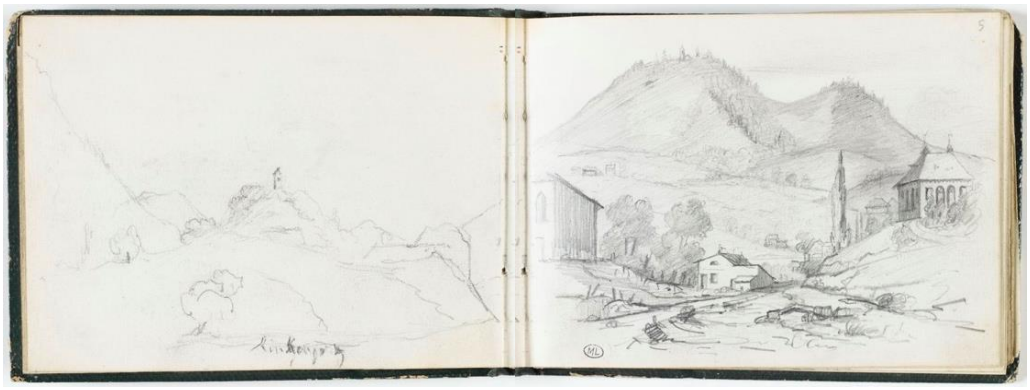

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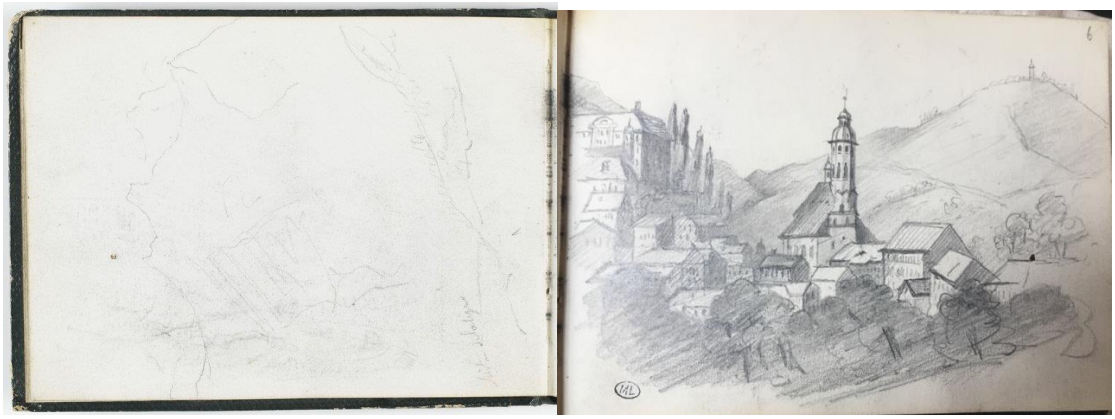

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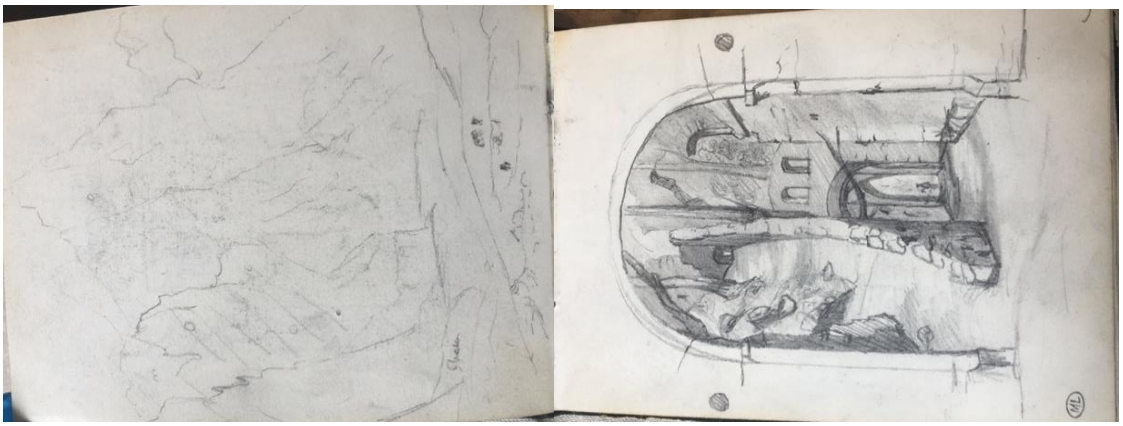

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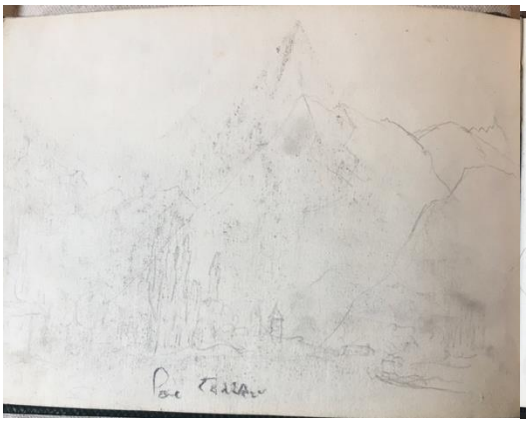

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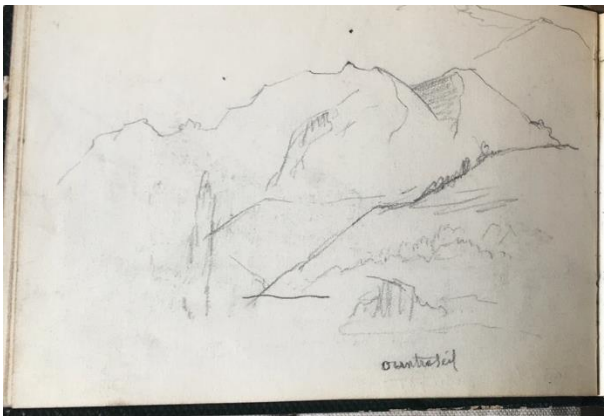

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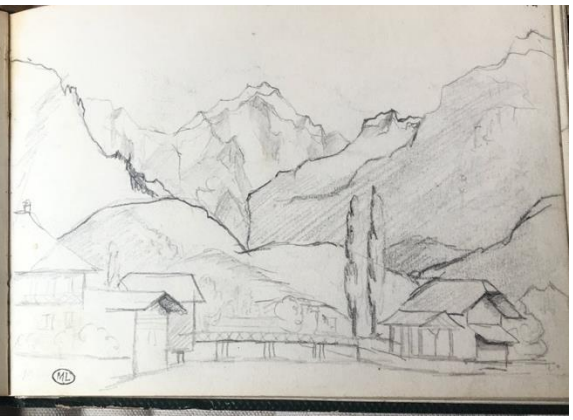

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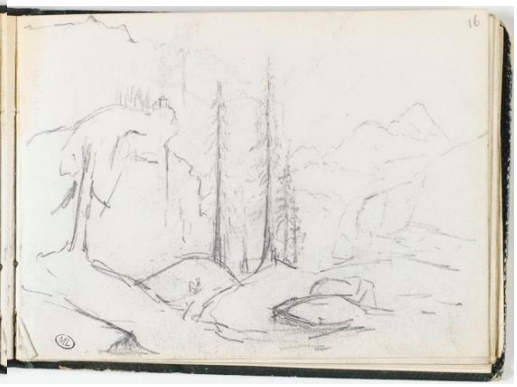

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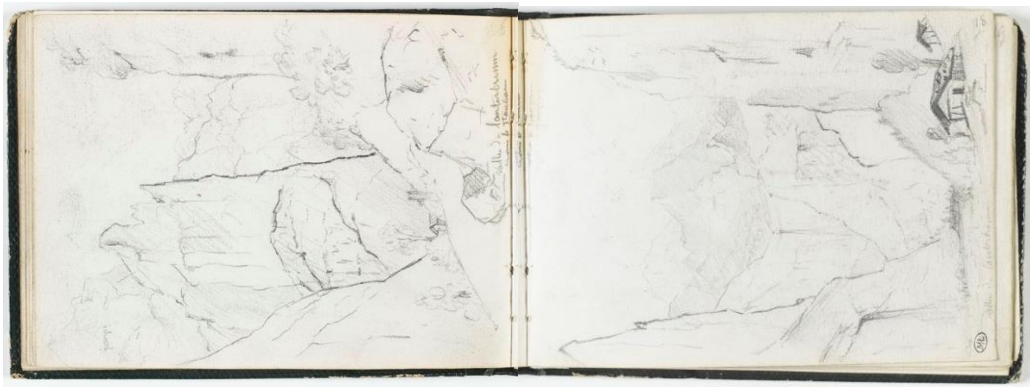

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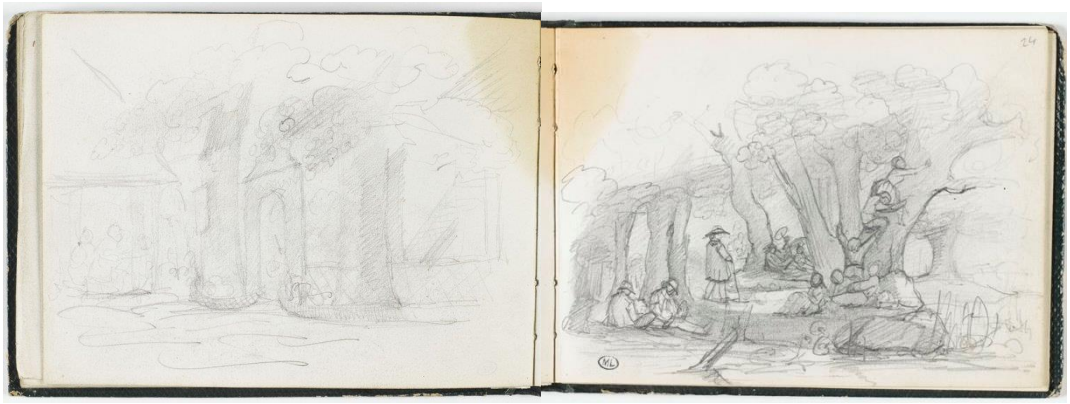

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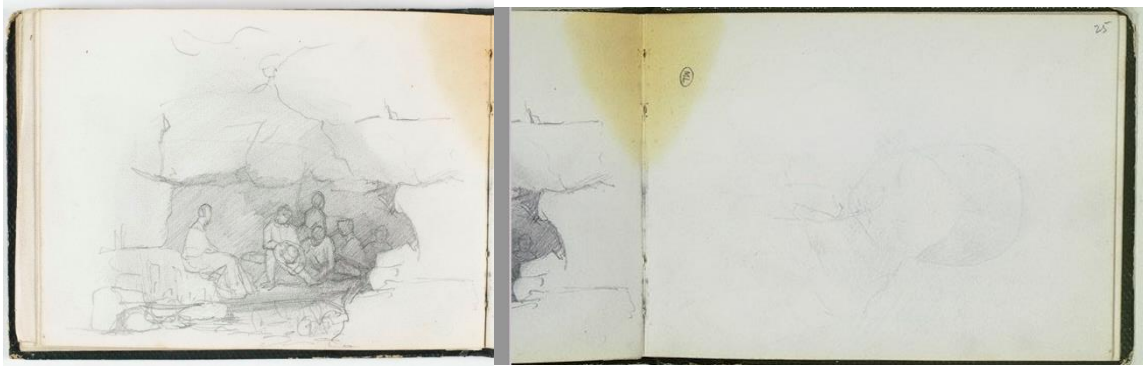

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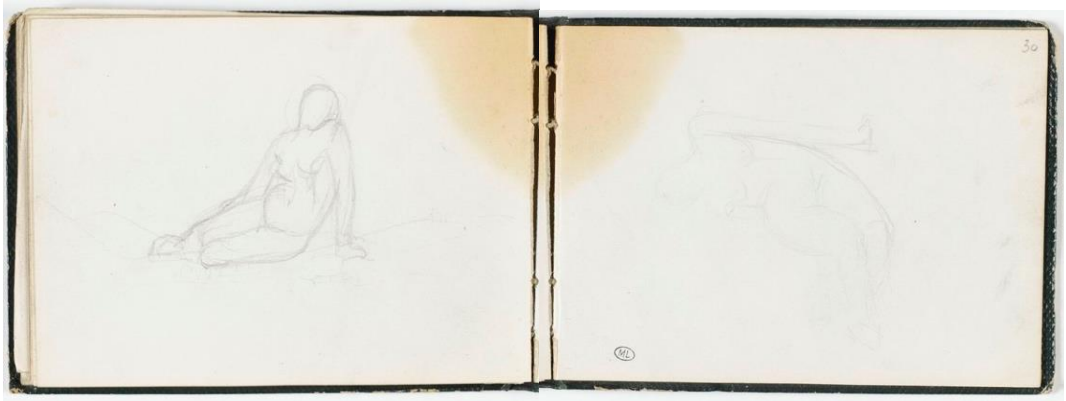

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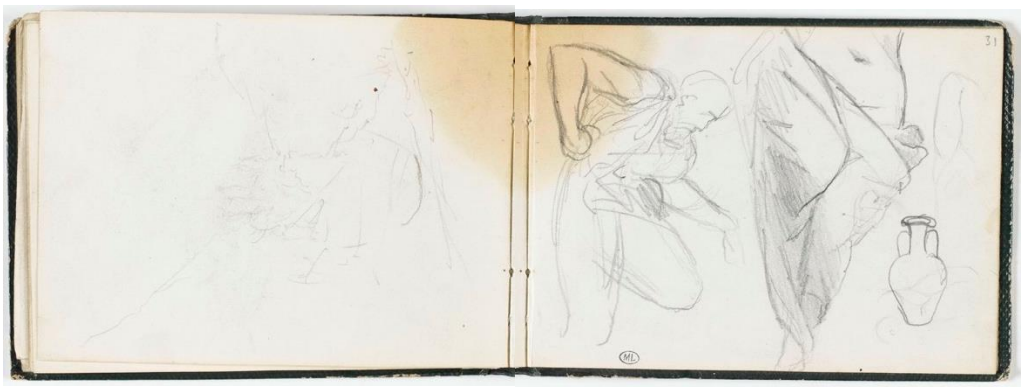

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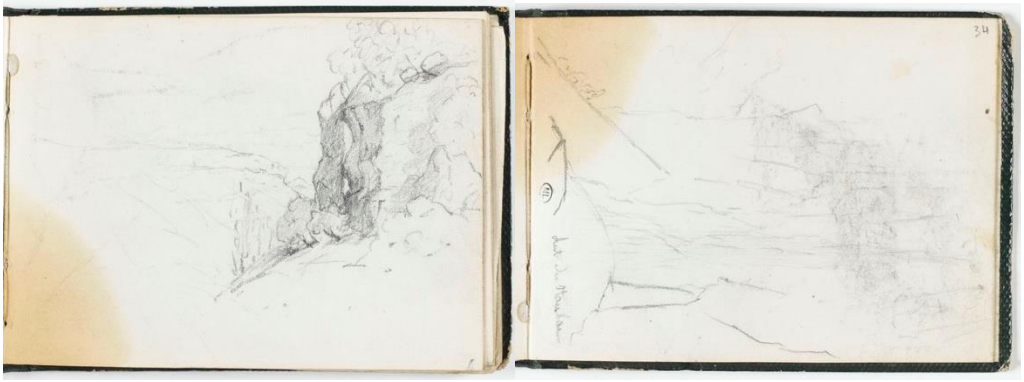

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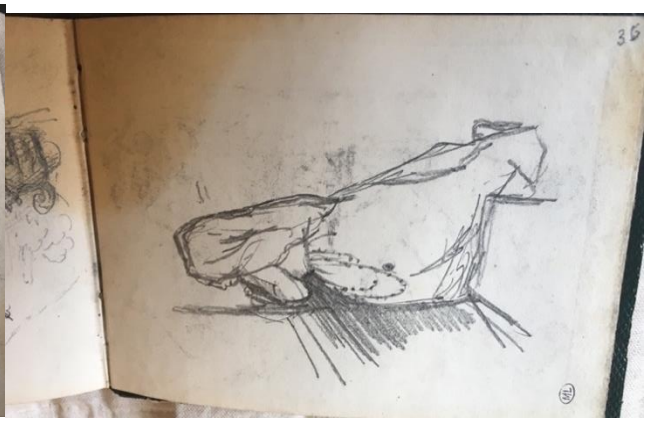

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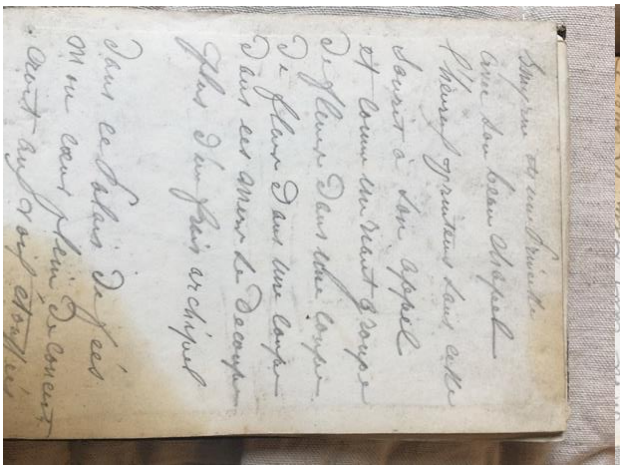

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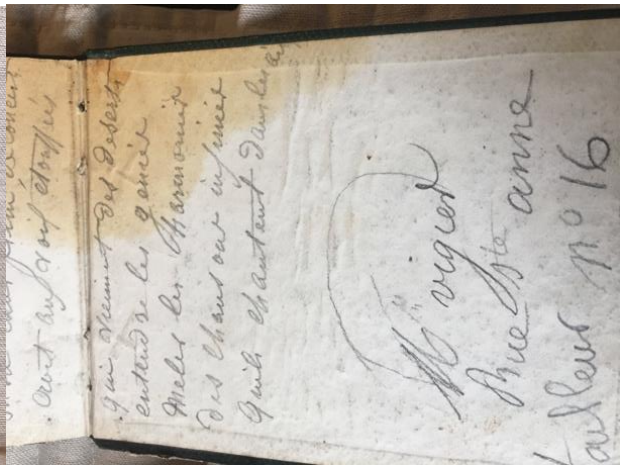

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III. MAP

Map of Courbet's route as recorded in Louvre Cabinet des Dessins RF- 29234 and RF-9105.
Annotations by Louisa Mahoney.

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